ROMANIA'S CULTURE OF VIOLENCE: TWO REPORTS

JULY 30 & AUGUST 6, 1990 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Behind closed doors at the Soviet Party Congress · Bush, taxes, and the 'overclass'

THE END

And other fin-de-siècle, fin-de-millennium preoccupations

BY HILLEL SCHWARTZ

The conversion of Kevin Phillips
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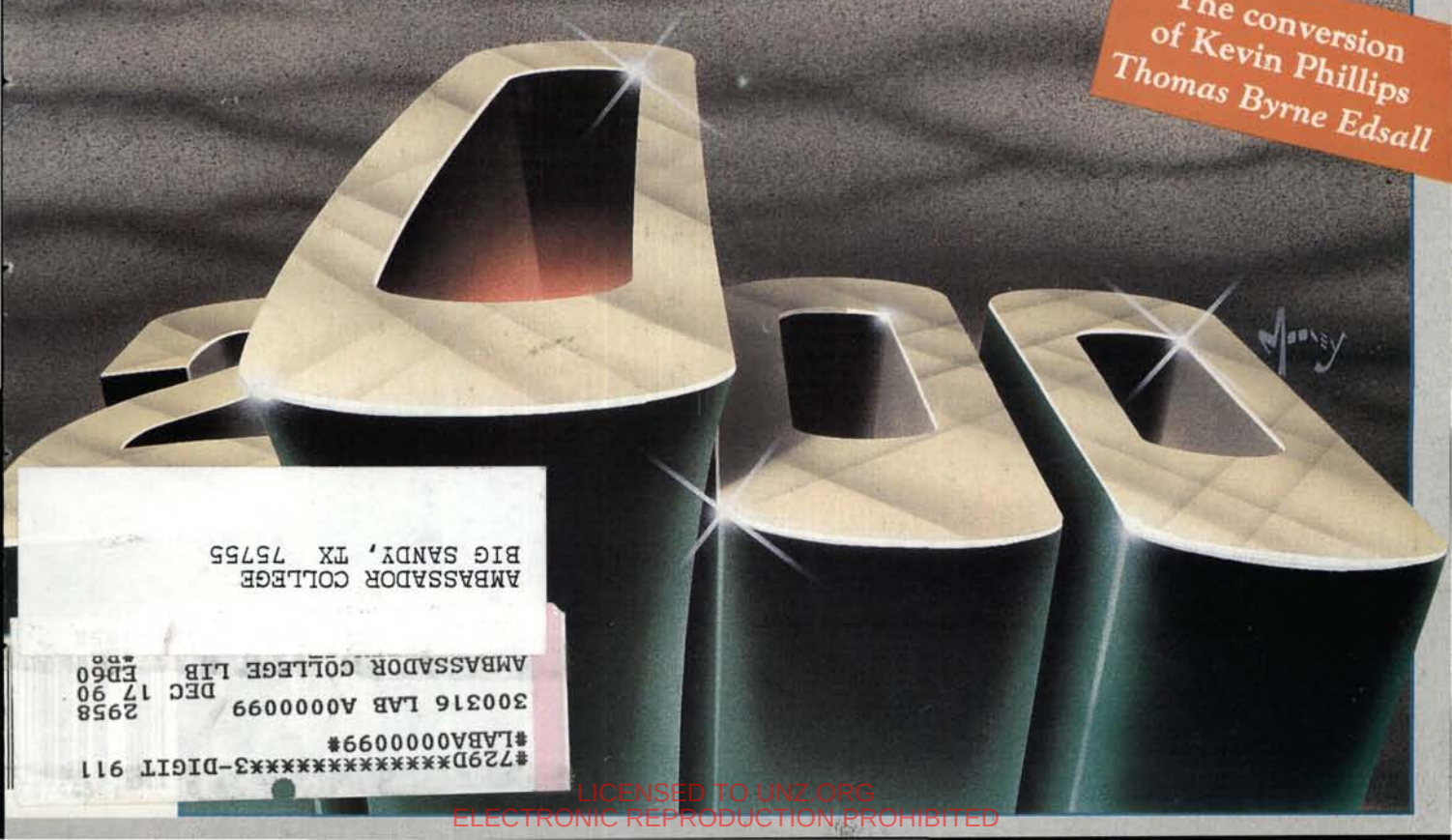

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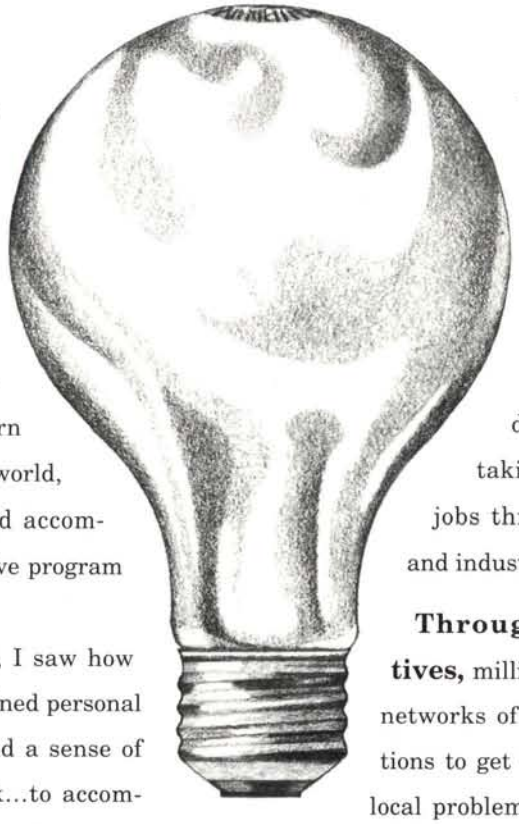
The POWER of IDEAS

By Bob Bergland



Ideas are powerful tools. They've toppled governments...and built countries, including this one.

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Bob Bergland is Executive Vice President of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JULY 30 & AUGUST 6, 1990

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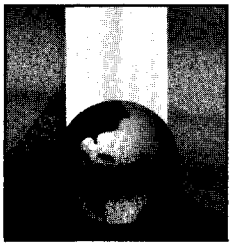

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FROM WASHINGTON

Fear of change

Is the United States still a great nation, capable of facing unafraid the challenges of the future? Or are we paralyzed by fear of change and capable only of wallowing in nostalgia for past greatness? Declinists might take as two small bits of evidence for their side of this argument the penny and the dollar bill. American coinage and currency have become ridiculous. A dollar is barely worth what a quarter was twenty years ago. At an average worker's wage, the time it takes to pick up a penny on the sidewalk is more than a penny is worth. Yet the U.S. Mint will manufacture almost 13 billion of these items in 1990. You have to whip out your wallet to buy a ride on most public transit systems, and the machine designed to take your paper money, if it exists, is probably broken. We have forgotten the pleasure of walking around with the weight of real, valuable "walking around" money jingling in our pockets.

Other nations have come to grips with past inflation and redignified their money. In Britain and France, the highest-value coin is worth about $1.70. In Germany and Japan it's about three dollars. The smallest British bill is now a five-pound note, worth about eight dollars. Japan's smallest note, 1000 yen, is worth about $6.60. Canada eliminated the dollar bill last year.

Americans visiting Britain often complain about the bulk of British coinage and the way it tears holes in your pocket. Yet *The Economist* calculated last year that British coins deliver more value per weight and size than American ones. A quarter is worth 4.41 cents per gram of weight; the pound coin, introduced in 1983, is worth 18.64 cents (U.S.) per gram. Even the notoriously massive, heptagonal 50-pence piece weighs in at 6.56 cents per gram. Similarly, the quarter is worth 5.41 cents per square centimeter; the pound coin, 44.46 cents.

A great nation makes national policy decisions based on the interests of society as a whole. A nation past its days of greatness is a cacophony of self-protective interest groups. There is legislation before Congress to replace the dollar bill with a coin and eliminate the penny. Leading the charge for currency reform is The Coin Coalition, dominated by vending machine interests. Leading the opposition is Americans for Common Cents, a front for the zinc lobby. Today's pennies are 97 percent zinc. Ironically, copper interests favor currency reform. They hope that a dollar coin will contain copper, as pennies no longer do. Opponents, by contrast, claim the support of the Industry Council for Tangible Assets (whatever that is), the Professional Numismatics Guild, and the Bowie Coin Club.

As is standard in this sort of legislative battle, both sides assert a touching concern for disadvantaged groups. The Coin Coalition notes that a dollar coin would be a boon to the "visually impaired." Americans for Common Cents counters that eliminating the penny would harm "those with incomes under $10,000, non-whites, and Hispanics, and those adults with less than twelve years of education." Offered in support of this proposition is a study by an economics professor at Penn State University. Using an elaborate computer simulation, he concludes that even if the law requires rounding cash transactions up or down to the nearest nickel, the rounding will be up an average of 70 percent of the time. Further research demonstrates that the aforesaid disfavored groups are more likely to do business in cash. Q.E.D.

On the other hand, The Coin Coalition offers evidence (in the form of a "Dear Abby" column) that the proliferation of near-worthless pennies is a threat to the health of household pets, who swallow them and develop "vomiting, sudden anemia, and in some cases serious illness and even death" from ingestion of zinc.

Both lobbies, of course, claim that cost considerations are on their side. The Chicago Transit Authority spends $2 million a year hand-counting dollar bills. Banks charge six cents extra for a roll of fifty pennies. Etc.

The pros flaunt a recent General Accounting Office study that concluded, with comic exactitude, that replacing the dollar bill with a coin would save the federal government $318 million a year. They play down the same study's conclusion that eliminating the penny would lose the government $2 million a year, since pennies still cost less than a cent to produce. Instead, they trumpet a 1987 study by the National Association of Convenience Stores, which figured that eliminating the penny would save two seconds per transaction for their members. Times 10 billion transactions a year, that's 5.5 million hours, or "$22 million in lost productivity."

The economist from Penn State ridicules the idea that clerks will "suddenly be free to stock shelves or clean stores" without the penny to deal with. He notes the cost of training them in the intricacies of rounding up and down. And he asserts that the inflationary effect of the "rounding up" phenomenon could eventually increase government-paid cost-of-living adjustments by as much as $1.5 billion a year. That wins the prize for the largest number either side has been able to throw around so far.

Then there is the vexing and subtle issue of cash register drawers. Most have five coin compartments. The GAO notes that this should allow for a dollar coin without the need to eliminate pennies. True, some stores now use the fifth compartment for rolled coins. But this, the agency notes puritanically, is "not advisable due to the weight this impose[s] on open cash register drawers." Could the rolled coins go into the space now reserved for dollar bills? Only if such bills are eliminated, and if The Coin Coalition is thwarted in its design to reintroduce the two-dollar bill. And what about checks and Food Stamps? To the judicious mind, neither side has morality totally on its side in the cash register aspect of the controversy. There is much to be said for both points of view.

No one would ever design a coinage and currency system like the one inflation has bequeathed us. For all the studies one way and another, there can't be any serious question that eliminating the penny and moving to a dollar coin would be efficient. The question is whether we are too backward-looking to take the step forward.

The government is traumatized by the failure of the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin in 1979. But that was badly bungled. Among other problems, the Anthony dollar looked like a quarter. The GAO believes the key failure was not forcing people to use the coin. The next time, "Congress and the administration [must] jointly reach, and agree to sustain, an agreement to eliminate the dollar note in the face of negative public reaction." But what would be the point of such anti-democratic fortitude? Why not give people another chance to come to their senses voluntarily? After all, the dollar has lost almost half its value since that last experiment. As a paper currency, it's a joke. As a handsome, weighty coin, it could be great again.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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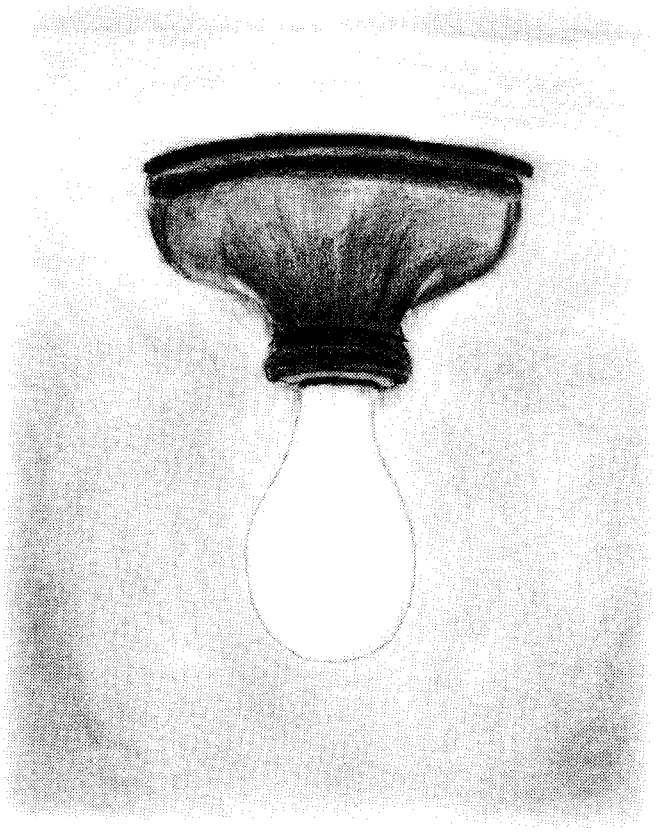

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CORRESPONDENCE

New York stories

To the editors:

Why should Andrew Sullivan ("The Two Faces of Bensonhurst," July 2) think it is racist, unconscious or otherwise, for Father Barozzi to point out that a number of Italians have been mugged by blacks, that blacks in the neighborhood play loud music till late at night, or that the black family is in a woeful condition, and that these are all disagreeable states of affairs? Such remarks would be racist, of course, only if they were lies, but Sullivan never gives us any reason to doubt their veracity.

One hopes that Sullivan does not subscribe to the view that criticism of whites is socially salutary, but any criticism of blacks, true or not, is, ipso facto, racist. If Father Barozzi's comments were false, then Sullivan should call him on them, but if they are true, to impute racism to them is insulting.

RICHARD L. CLEARY
Dallastown, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

As the state senator representing the part of Bensonhurst where the incident occurred, I would like to compliment Andrew Sullivan on the fact that his article was probably one of the few that I have seen that shows Bensonhurst is a multiethnic area. At the meeting Sullivan describes on May 31 at the Cotillion Terrace, I urged everyone not to participate in Al Sharpton's march planned for June 2, which would have given him an opportunity for additional media coverage in order to promote his own agenda.

The majority of community residents were concerned with two questions: Why wasn't Sharpton required to secure a permit to march, and if he was not required, is there any way he could be prohibited from marching in the area? He had already marched thirteen times, and the signs and actions of the marchers were an attempted assault upon the area. But the media did not portray any of Sharpton's antics; they were interested only in showing Bensonhurst as a racist community.

After explaining to the residents that there was no legal apparatus with which to stop Sharpton, they agreed that the best method would be to not give him the attention that he was seeking in the media. The community reacted with such cohesion that Sharpton received no media coverage of his march.

MARTIN M. SOLOMON
Albany, New York

The writer is a New York state senator.

To the editors:

In describing the warring factions behind the Bensonhurst imbroglio, Tamar Jacoby ("Garvey's Ghosts," July 2) identified the "race men" as "seeking a black life apart . . . a nation within a nation." This spirit of separatism is not unique in the world (look at Quebec) and is based on a real fear of never escaping second-class citizenship. It has a quiet counterpart among American Indian groups, particularly among those on reservations, but it is voiced in legends in more somber and lethal tones. Legends among Indians in Nevada and California indicate that eventually a "racial war"—not physical, but a "battle of the minds"—will occur in this country "between the white snake, the black snake, and the red [where] the white snake will be broken in half by the black snake" owing to the "white man's greed" and eventual self-immolation.

WALTER BROMBERG
Carmichael, California

Trivial pursuits

To the editors:

I agree that flag burning is indeed one of the great non-issues of the day ("Get Serious," July 9&16). Why, then, do you feel compelled to include *three* essays on this subject in one issue? The best way for the media to handle this subject is to ignore it. Members of the jingoistic right and unctuous left wouldn't touch this matter if they weren't assured of phalanxes of reporters with microphones and cameras every time one of them opens his mouth or pulls out his pen.

ANTHONY CHASE FOUNTAIN
New York, New York

Critical knowledge

To the editors:

Louis Menand ("Lost Faculties," July 9&16) writes that "criticism became academically respectable, as Gerald Graff, Wallace Martin, and other historians of the profession have pointed out, not because the university was persuaded to modify its notion of what counts as knowledge, but because criticism was modified to meet the institutional requirements of the university. The solution was to make criticism theoretical."

I never "pointed out" any such thing. Literary criticism could not have become academically respectable without significantly modifying the university's notion of what counts as knowledge. In fact, it's precisely this modification, in the direction of greater theoretical awareness, that Menand dislikes. What I did point out is that academic critics and teachers of literature are turning to theory out of a laudable desire to take stock of what they are doing.

Menand calls most academic criticism "a vast sea of conformity" and describes academic humanities departments as "completely corrupt." Is pandering to these prejudices supposed to illustrate the freedom of literary journalism from conformity and corruption? Menand's review is just another example of the current wave of self-serving professor-bashing, no less infuriatingly smug than the Roger Kimball version that Menand pretends to deplore.

GERALD GRAFF
Evanston, Illinois

The writer is an English professor at Northwestern University.

Louis Menand replies:

I apologize to Mr. Graff; I remembered his book making a more interesting point about the New Criticism than it did. There's absolutely nothing in my review against theoretical inquiry, only against the system that forces most of that inquiry to be so predictable and repetitive. Since I am a professor, I don't see what is self-serving about what I wrote.

Overdeveloped

To the editors:

In reviewing the "Photography Until Now" show ("Out of Focus," July 2), Jed Perl offers extravagant praise for Walker Evans's photo of a church organ. "He is Flaubertian: he takes pieces of realist detail and draws them together into a perfectly etched classical whole."

"Perfectly etched classical whole" defines a Vermeer, to which the Evans work is but the feeblest of shadows. And was it not Flaubert who condemned a decadent society that "decorated photographers while exiling poets"?

ARNOLD SINGER
Ithaca, New York

For the record

To the editors:

In "Mandela's Men" (July 9&16), Jacob Weisberg writes: "TransAfrica celebrated Maurice Bishop's 'unique experiment in articulating and practicing participatory democracy at the grass roots and progressive social change' in Grenada shortly before he was overthrown by the U.S. invasion in 1983."

Maurice Bishop was overthrown, and killed, not by the United States, but by his inferiors in his own government. It was these men, Hudson Austin, Bernard Coard, and their co-conspirators, who the United States deposed.

GARTH PETERSON
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 30 & AUGUST 6, 1990

PAX KAPITAL

On July 6, as the London summit of NATO members was adjourning, President Bush, by one reporter's account, turned to an acquaintance and said jovially, "Leadership." It was a lighthearted bit of self-congratulation, and amply deserved; the president had just gotten the allies to endorse a well-crafted communiqué of American design. Indeed, so pleased with himself was the president that he added: "Maybe even vision."

Let's not get carried away. It is important to understand what did and didn't happen at the NATO summit. The "Declaration of London" did make NATO's continued existence more palatable to two nations whose opinions matter: the Soviet Union and Germany. The Soviet Union found comfort in NATO's several overtures to the East, notably its pledges to "never . . . be the first to use force" and to make its nuclear arms "truly weapons of last resort." For Germany's consumption, there was the plan to abolish the shortest-range nuclear arms, the kind mainly good for killing people in the immediate neighborhood, i.e., Germans. There was also talk of recasting NATO forces in multinational units that would include German soldiers, thus making NATO's Germany contingent seem less like an occupying force.

What the Declaration of London didn't do is create a stable security arrangement for the new world. Post-London NATO, like pre-London NATO, is an alliance poised to fend off a dormant Soviet threat—a threat that might conceivably awaken and thus warrants NATO's continued health, but that probably will never again constitute the bulk of what Europeans need to worry about. So the question of how Europe, and indeed the world, will stay tolerably peaceful in the absence of stabilizing bipolar tension remains open. NATO has endeared itself to the new world, but it hasn't adapted to it; it has been repainted, not rebuilt.

Of course, keeping peace needn't be NATO's job alone. There is no shortage of other acronyms attached to high-minded international groups, and lately they have been parading across the op-ed pages, vying for a job as peacekeeper. There is the CSCE—the thirty-five-member Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which consists of Canada, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the rest of Europe except Albania. There is the EC—the twelve-member European Community. Less often mentioned in this context, but unmatched in economic potency, is the G-7, the Group of Seven industrial powers: Japan, the United States, Canada, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy. And there are various old standbys—the U.N., the IMF, the World Bank, and the Council of Europe.

One way to sort through this alphabet soup, and figure out who should be keeping the peace, is to sort out the different peaces to be kept. In a world with several distinct sources of chaos, there is room for several custodians of order.

1. Return of the Red Army. Of all plausible threats, the resurrection of a hostile Soviet Union is the only one that NATO by itself can handle. If the threat keeps shrinking through Soviet retrenchment, then NATO can keep shrinking too—but not disappear; it will be the better part of a decade, at least, before the USSR is so surely on the road to democracy and a market economy that a U-turn is unthinkable.

2. European tribalism. Of the various scenarios in which nationalist, ethnic, or religious tensions break the European peace, the most commonly discussed—a suddenly militant Germany—is not the most likely. It's likely enough, certainly, so that German membership in NATO and the EC is vaguely comforting. But surer sources of turmoil lie to the east: in the frequent failures of national borders (such as Czechoslovakia's and Romania's) to coincide neatly with ethnic, linguistic, or religious divisions; in the sparks that will fly as countries long forced into artificial alliance now freely express diverging interests; and, if the Soviet Union decomposes, in the unpredictable behavior of suddenly autonomous southern and western republics. A more general tension between haves (Western Europe), have-littles (Central Europe), and have-nots (Eastern Europe) is also possible, but so long as the countries to the east stay faithful to the goals of economic and political liberty, and aid and guidance keep flowing

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from the West, everyone should stay on cordial terms.

The common eastern border of NATO and the EC provides a natural fire wall against the spread of tribal antagonisms (a fact that may, years from now, argue for extending the two organizations eastward in unison as formerly Communist nations qualify for membership and seek it). But that leaves much room for conflagration, and since NATO troops won't anytime soon be intervening beyond NATO's borders to prevent war, an acronym reaching further east could be helpful.

The virtual consensus choice is the CSCE. The (as we used to say) Warsaw Pact nations like the CSCE because, unlike NATO and the EC, it includes them. Doves in the West also like the CSCE for its warm sense of inclusion. Even some hawks in the West like the CSCE, but for a different reason: because it is toothless—still the preferred condition, in their minds, of anything that includes the Soviet Union. So far the CSCE's main accomplishment was to produce the 1975 Helsinki human rights accords. These proved a valuable organizing tool for anti-totalitarian protesters such as Prague's Charter 77 and Moscow's Helsinki Watch, but when signatories—such as Czechoslovakia and the USSR—violated the accords, the CSCE was helpless to do anything about it.

Proposals for giving the CSCE a set of teeth abound. Some advocate placing real power—ranging from economic sanctions all the way to joint military intervention—in a core security group, analogous to the U.N.'s Security Council, except not crippled by a single-state veto. This idea draws a warm response in the USSR, which would be part of the Big Five, along with Germany, the United States, Britain, and France, but is more coolly greeted not only in places like Rome and Copenhagen but also in the Central European states—which, after all these years, finally have some sovereignty to guard jealously. A rotating membership of, say, five additional nations wouldn't overly weaken this core group, but that would still leave the thirty lesser members on the periphery of power five years out of six.

Though the Declaration of London fell short of advocating teeth for the CSCE, it did, happily, back creation of a secretariat and a CSCE parliament, to be called the Assembly of Europe. Still, it didn't say what sorts of things the Assembly should do. Here's a tip: early on, invent a decision-making mechanism that requires something less than unanimity and also accounts for the differing magnitudes of the members. If Romania plus Malta plus the Vatican equals the United States plus Germany plus the USSR, not much will get done.

3. Non-European tribalism. If you're among those not troubled by saber-rattling in remote regions, then consider the various combinations of chemical arms, nuclear technology, and increasingly long-range ballistic missiles that have been accumulating around the world (in Iraq, India, and North Korea, for example). A multinational group that could discourage nations from using these things—or better yet from selling or buying them—is to be desired. But current candidates for the job appear unimpressive. The nuclear nonproliferation treaty has slowed but hardly stopped the spread of nuclear arms technology. The Missile Technology Control Regime, consisting of the G-7 nations, is little more than idealism incarnate. Though its members pledge not to export crucial missile technologies, it makes no attempt to keep other nations, such as China and Brazil, from doing so. Nor, for that matter, do its members' own pledges seem to matter much. Somehow, French missile guidance technology has been finding its way into Iraq, where it can be used to boost the effective range of old Soviet Scud missiles.

Notwithstanding this inauspicious debut, the best candidate for the job of controlling volatile technologies is indeed the G-7 nations. They are a workably small group (so long as a five- or even six-member majority, rather than consensus, is deemed sufficient for action), yet together they control more than half the globe's GNP. They can use this economic clout in various ways—imposing joint trade sanctions against the Chinas, Brazils, and Libyas of the world, or perhaps withholding loans from them. (The G-7 nations dominate the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but for these purposes it might be simplest to set up a separate lending institution that explicitly rewards developing nations that don't acquire or sell the most feared technologies.)

Let's be honest: there is a kind of elitism at work here. Who, after all, are the seven big industrial nations to boss around the rest of the world? How can a country with a fat nuclear arsenal deny nuclear arms to others? The legalistic answer is that the G-7 nations have no obligation to trade freely with, or provide cut-rate loans to, any country—and they can select their beneficiaries by any criteria they choose. The moral answer is that, in trying to slow the spread of massively lethal technologies, we're trying to save millions of lives, and preserve a critical experiment: finding out whether the world can continue in its present direction and evolve into a tolerably harmonious community of democratic nations. Extraordinary measures are warranted.

4. The End of Nature. Well, OK, the environmental threat to world order isn't quite *that* grave. Certainly it doesn't justify the degree of bullying that weapons proliferation does. But once again, G-7 stands naturally at center stage. Not only do these seven industrial nations create much of the world's gaseous garbage, but they are also among the only nations wealthy enough to contemplate the economic sacrifices of environmental reform. For developing nations a more realistic contribution is sheer population control; the fewer people there are, the less fossil fuel gets burned. This is the basic deal G-7 should orchestrate: the haves clean up their industries, while the have-nots get serious about population control. If the have-nots' time horizons aren't long enough to foster ardent interest in this deal, other incentives, such as debt relief, may be added. (This relief—in the form of "debt-for-nature" swaps—is also the best way to solve the particular problem of dwindling tropical forests.) Of course, little progress on this front is likely to be made so long

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as John Sununu is the administration's de facto environment czar.

The Wilsonian ideal of a world jointly and civilly run by its nations has foundered twice this century. The League of Nations was essentially unworkable, especially in the absence of the United States, and the somewhat better crafted United Nations was paralyzed by the cold war and by the General Assembly's mobocracy. More to the point, such mammoth structures aren't needed for each and every world problem. Better to let international groupings arise naturally, each tailored to its particular cause. And these specialist groups needn't compete with the U.N.; its 1987 treaty to reduce ozone-eating fluorocarbons, for example, was fine as far as it went—it's just that G-7 is positioned to go further. This sort of redundancy of purpose, far from being abhorred as untidy, is to be cherished as a safeguard against the various inevitable failures in international cooperation.

Another advantage of letting dozens of flowers bloom is that ad hoc international groupings don't labor under the moral burden that comes with calling yourself a world government. They needn't, for instance, tediously justify any departure from the one-nation, one-vote principle. This means that the large industrial powers—which, after all, have created a disproportionate share of the world's problems and its opportunities, and possess (to put the matter more pragmatically) most of its clout—can take the lead role when appropriate.

We needn't feel guilty about this. If handing the reins over to the wealthiest nations meant entrusting the planet to tyrants, it would be one thing. But as history would have it, capitalist prosperity seems to go hand in hand with liberal democracy. As more and more nations discover this for themselves, and earn a larger say in international affairs, world leadership should assume a steadily broader and more diffuse form. The eventual goal, in the sunniest view, is a prosperous and democratic planet of prosperous and democratic nations. Pax Kapital—as you might call our proposed next phase in world history—would then merge seamlessly with pax Democratica.

NOTEBOOK

NO WONDER GOOD HELP IS HARD TO FIND: "Where Are the New Priests?" wonders an advertisement in the conservative Catholic magazine *Crisis*. "Sadly, we must admit that thousands who would be entering the seminary today are not with us because they were aborted in the sanctuary of their mothers' wombs." This claim comes from an organization called Human Life International in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Of course, even if all those potential priests were with us today, it wouldn't do much to relieve the sacerdotal shortage. If abortion were illegal, the extra priests would be ministering to tens of thousands of taxi drivers, lawyers, and dental technicians who would be here as well. But never mind. Can't get an electrician to come to the house on Saturday? Blame *Roe* v. *Wade*.

POWER MONOPOLISTS: In last week's issue of TNR Steven Mufson wondered whether the African National Congress will prove capable of functioning in a pluralistic body politic. Despite Nelson Mandela's reassuring words in the West, there are reasons to doubt it will. Already recognized as the major representative of the majority black opposition in negotiations with the government, the ANC seems to be jockeying to be the *only* non-governmental presence at the table. This induces anxiety among Coloureds and Indians who worry that the ANC will ignore their interests and trample over their rights. And if the ANC parleys alone with F. W. de Klerk, millions of South African black people will be left out of the process, too—more than half the black population, in fact, if you count all those at odds with the ANC's precepts. The ANC's efforts, for example, to make Mangosuthu Buthelezi's largely Zulu Inkatha movement a pariah have been so heavy-handed that they have brought Buthelezi into alliance with radical Pan-Africanists whom the ANC also wants out of the picture. Throughout South Africa ANC cadres have fought pitched battles with political opponents. The most violent of these have been in Natal and Kwazulu, where Inkatha's strength is greatest. The ANC enlisted COSATU, the largest trade union, in a national stayaway on July 2—another tactical move in the ANC's ongoing battle with alternative but legitimate political movements. Though the other trade unions stayed away from the stayaway, the incident does not augur well for independent trade unionism in the post-apartheid era. Nor does it augur well for the fate of other independent associations. When Archie Gumede, the president of the Natal branch of the United Democratic Front, the voice of the ANC while the ANC was banned, told the press he disapproved of the stayaway, Walter Sisulu, the most important Congress leader after Mandela, mounted a threatening campaign against him. The pro-ANC weekly *Mail* reported that the ANC had "gagged" Gumede. Is the ANC's talk about unity just a way of saying they want everybody else to shut up?

ALLAH'S WAY OF CROWD CONTROL: Following the grisly trampling to death of 1,426 Muslim pilgrims in a tunnel at the holy city of Mecca, Saudi King Fahd offered some divine spin control. The accident, he said, was "God's will, which is above everything. It was fate. Had they not died there, they would have died elsewhere and at the same predestined moment." All 1,426 of them, regardless of age or health, regardless of how widely scattered they might have been, were under divine sentence of death to be car-

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ried out at the same moment on July 2, 1990, no matter what. The tunnel just had their names on it. So never mind the investigation. Comforting words indeed, for the survivors and victims' families.

THE MALAYSIAN MODEL: At last December's Conservative Leadership Conference, when paleocon Reed Irvine endorsed Malaysia's policy of automatically executing even small-time drug traffickers, Bill Bennett agreed: "Hanging works, no doubt about it." ("All Rightniks," TNR, January 22.) Now Bennett gets to watch Malaysia's recidivism-proof drug policy practiced on an American. Kerry Wiley, a former IBM employee from Sacramento, was arrested last November in a Kuala Lumpur suburb for possessing roughly a pound of marijuana—enough to qualify him as a dealer under Malaysian law. The penalties are draconian: life in prison for possession and death for selling. Malaysia has hanged ninety-three men and women for drug trafficking since 1975; 191 others are on death row. There may not be much Bennett can do to save Wiley (who is still awaiting trial), but he could at least give some sign that he was joking when he suggested that Malaysian justice is what he wants for the United States. •

Communist reformers conspire.

THE GORBACHEV TEAM

By Gregory Freidin

MOSCOW

Ask a Moscow cab driver what he expects from the 28th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and he'll answer: "Nothing, who gives a damn!" Ask a Moscow intellectual, and the answer will be: "The self-dissolution of the Party." Ask a progressive Party member from Moscow, Leningrad, Yaroslavl, or Sverdlovsk, and he'll tell you about his resolve to quit the Party and, who knows, perhaps join another party instead. Ask a man from the provinces, where the new Soviets are weak, and he'll say he won't quit, because in the absence of powerful courts and independent unions, the Party remains—in the words of a Party secretary from a factory in the Leningrad region—"the only counterforce to the arbitrary rule of the factory boss."

The Congress, then, is not as irrelevant as it may appear to one sitting in the hall listening to the troglodyte oratory of the conservative apparat, or as it may rightly appear in the long run. But in the middle range, a couple of years down the road, a lot rides on its outcome. There's even the possibility of the Congress disintegrating into a melee à la Dostoyevsky: a delegation of miners, who are staging a twenty-four-hour political strike on July 11, is expected to arrive in Moscow and demand to be admitted into the Palace of Congresses. They are bringing with them a bouquet of demands including: resignation of the central government, formation of a "Cabinet of popular confidence" (would the Presidential Council do?), and nationalization of all property belonging to the Communist Party and the government-controlled trade unions. For Mikhail Gorbachev, who declared his solidarity with the miners' sentiments on the first day of the Congress, this wild card may yet turn out to be a real trump.

With his popular mandate shrinking by the minute, Gorbachev, the consummate master of the possible, must accomplish the impossible: having foregone the general elections, he must transform the 17 million members of the Communist Party into his loyal or at least harmless troopers, while pushing the Party away from the office of the presidency and other key institutions of the Soviet state. This may not be the optimal scenario for the Party apparatchiks, but they cannot let go of Gorbachev, for, paradoxical as it sounds, he represents their sole claim to legitimacy, not to say survival. The overwhelming vote in favor of retaining him as general secretary says as much. Even for the ultraconservatives, Gorbachev seems to be the only insurance policy, however unreliable, that can protect them from the growing ire of the formerly obedient subjects of the Soviet party-state. "Look how they are tormenting old man Honecker!" This cri de coeur released in the foyer of the Palace of Congresses issued from the lips of a portly lieutenant colonel (also a secretary of the emaciated imperial wing of the Lithuanian Communist Party) and caused a considerable amount of grave nodding of heads among the delegates who could easily imagine sharing Honecker's fate.

For the majority of the delegates at the Congress (58 percent, according to a poll conducted by the staff of the Congress), the Party's main task at the moment is to stabilize the state and society. Curiously, more than two-thirds of the delegates tend to favor achieving this goal by means of "democratizing" the Party. If under these circumstances the Congress concludes with even a partial triumph of the conservative forces (through their domination of the new Central Committee, the election of a Ligachev for the No. 2 post, or acceptance of the discipline clause in the new Party Rules), a mass exodus from the Party will be inevitable. Upward of 20 percent in many crucial areas are expected to return their membership cards at once. In that case, all bets are off.

A key item on Gorbachev's immediate agenda, therefore, is to prevent the left, so-called democratic wing of

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the Party from abandoning ship even if the conservatives gain the upper hand in the new Central Committee (the Politburo has been rendered harmless by having the republics' Party chairmen receive automatic membership on it). Apparently it is with this purpose in mind that Alexander N. Yakovlev, Gorbachev's right-hand man and, allegedly, the father of perestroika, held a meeting on July 4 with the newly formed Democratic Unity bloc (so named in pointed contrast with the old-fashioned Party principle of "democratic centralism"), which includes the most democratically minded Congress delegates. Among the groups are the Democratic Platform (which wants to transform the CPSU into a parliamentary party), the Marxist Platform (which wants broad democratization combined with collective ownership of the means of production), the caucus of Young Communists (which represents the new, open-minded, modern generation), and the caucus of the first secretaries of grass-roots Party organizations (the Party leaders closest to the reform-minded elements in society). Judging by the Congress poll, 20 to 30 percent of the delegates agree with Democratic Unity on one or another key issue. A far greater number of Party members support the reformist faction outside what Yakovlev called the "double set of the Kremlin walls."

Run as a question-and-answer session, the meeting offers a unique view not only of the political strategy and tactics of the Gorbachev team, but also of the mentality and outlook of perestroika's most ardent, active supporters. Though foreign reporters were ostensibly barred from the meeting, my tape recorder managed to find its way into the hall and returned with a tape of most of the proceedings. A few days later the whole issue blew up. The conservatives distributed a falsified transcript of Yakovlev's speech containing statements calling for splitting the Party. Yakovlev fought back by releasing a fifteen-page transcript of his own—an incomplete one, I assume, since mine is about 14,000 words. (None of this would have happened if Yakovlev had not insisted on barring foreign newsmen, or had given the Soviet reporters carte blanche in covering the proceedings. Apparently, it is easier to take the man out of the Politburo than to take the Politburo out of the man.) What follows is drawn from my tape.

Under what circumstances should one quit the Party? This question came up again and again. To sum up his position, Yakovlev considers the conservative wing "historically doomed," its struggle for survival "a revanchist wave" that resembles not a particular political line but some sort of terminal "convulsions." To leave the Party at this point, therefore, would only strengthen the hand of the conservatives, abandoning to their leadership a large number of potentially reformable Party members for whom "Party loyalty and nostalgia, which are noble feelings," overshadow the issue of the political line. The key problem is to find a way, "acting from the inside—through struggle, goddamn it—to transform and renew our party so that it becomes a completely different party, psychologically, morally, and politically." The "democrats" need not fear the Party Rules, even if the conservative version prevails, for there will be no one to interfere with their "factional" politics. "No court," Yakovlev joked, "would be able to discriminate between the 'minority platforms,' which are allowed under the new Rules, and 'factions with their internal discipline,' which are not." In short, the future is with the "democrats," who would have a much better chance to transform the Party from within than to oppose the century-old colossus from the outside.

Some of the most startling revelations had to do with the proposed transition to a market economy. One Party secretary complained that there was "not a single book" where he could look up the meaning of such terms as a "publicly owned company" or "equity capital." Yakovlev agreed and went even further: "We have not trained any specialists. For example, we have no specialists in the sphere of credit—none. Nobody in our country knows—except for the academics, who know a little better—what equity capital is. There are very few people, if any at all, who know how financial institutions abroad work." Conceding that the outcome of the transition to a market economy is still in question, Yakovlev offered his own preliminary program, a "soft pillow," as he called it: "It is the creation of a priori conditions which must be present whether there is a market or not." He listed the following items: equity capital, privatization of small enterprises, expansion of private farming, a system of credit, flexible interest rates, etc. "Markets will emerge as their logical, normal consequence. Otherwise, lightning strikes, thunder rolls, oh horror! and we are all running back into the house with our ears plugged. Whose idea was it to increase the prices two- or three-fold? I still cannot figure out who was it that came up with this. A two- or threefold price rise [administered by the state] has nothing to do with a market economy."

When pressed hard about the snail's pace of investigations into corruption by high Party and government officials, Yakovlev pleaded with the audience to have some empathy for the officials accused in the "stagnation period," to view them in their historical context, and not only as perpetrators but as victims as well. (An echo of Vaclav Havel in this?) "Oh what unfortunate people! I do not mean to say that Rashidov [a corrupt former first secretary of Uzbekistan] does not deserve some sort of political judgment. But he lived under different circumstances. I do not wish to justify him. But if anything, they were victims."

Attempting to smooth the rough edges in the outlook of some of the more impatient "democrats," Yakovlev reminded them that they were part of a profoundly conservative society. "Although I knew that ours is a conservative country, I simply did not expect it to be so deeply conservative. I was not prepared for the extent, I simply had no idea. We have beaten down our country, we have completely knocked her out with this Stalinism." Another reminder of the rather peculiar character of Soviet society was elicited by a ques-

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tion regarding the repressions under Stalin:

> There are no angels, no devils. Now we are rehabilitating so and so—and we are right—but then you look further and see that previously this so and so himself had people jailed. So let us look at this repentance from the point of view of the kind of society we have. Eighty percent of those who perished [in the Gulag] perished by denunciation, denounced by people, by their neighbors, friends, colleagues from work. I have seen such cases! Such cases! Take one—just a page long. A short denunciation, a report of the arrest, the hearing of the Troika, the sentence, the investigator's testimony that the accused has admitted his guilt—all in this thin file—and then a note: the sentence has been carried out. Just one day, just one page, an anonymous denunciation. Dear comrades, we have graveyards, burial grounds, where we do not even know who lies there, we don't even have the lists. . . . So I always ask: Who are we? We are victims, we, those who have survived, are victims, too.

A representative from the Jewish Autonomous Region was on hand to ask Yakovlev about the Politburo and the Presidential Council's treatment of the "ancient Jewish question," and in particular emigration to Israel. Startlingly, Yakovlev declared himself in sympathy with some Zionists: "I know at what cost in suffering, historical suffering, Zionist ideas were generated. There are people who—having not the slightest interest in politics—consider themselves to be believers, people who call themselves Zionists, because they are believers. There is nothing more to it. If there are people who merely use Zionism as a ruse, that is another question. But then anything can be used as a ruse." Why isn't the government prosecuting the outbreaks of public anti-Semitism? "I, too, have asked this question, and more than once, including putting it to the prosecutor general. The prosecutor general is afraid to apply the law. There is massive pressure coming from somewhere that does not allow even our legal officers to apply the law. We have such people in all the echelons [of government]. Of course, they say: we are internationalists, and in addition we've got to beat the hell out of the Jews. That is their internationalism." The democrats, Yakovlev concluded, should do more to champion the struggle against anti-semitism.

The minimal accomplishment the Gorbachev team expects from the Congress is the separation of the Communist Party Politburo from the Presidential Council. With the exception of the president, who will also be the Party's general secretary, no member of the Council will be allowed to serve on the Politburo. "Neither the minister of defense nor the chairman of the KGB," Yakovlev insisted, "should be members of the Politburo." On July 6, at a press conference in Moscow, I broached the issue of combining the high Party and government posts with the head of the Communist Party of Russia, the conservative Ivan Polozkov. His answer was identical with Yakovlev's position. Could this be the beginning of a "new deal"?

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Where history and people get mangled.

BLOODY ROMANIA

By Robert D. Kaplan

BUCHAREST

There is a Danubian parable that eerily evokes Romania today. A young hero lops off the head of an evil dragon, only to see the blood that gurgles out of the dragon's neck spread pestilence throughout the countryside for years. Adrian Poruciuc, an expert on Romanian folklore, describes the Timisoara students as the young hero, and the ignorance, hatred, and violence plaguing Romania as the dragon's blood.

Timisoara is in the Banat, the flat western frontier region, where Romanians, Hungarians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Germans, and others have lived and married among themselves for centuries. This intermingling engendered a sophistication and social cohesion that is rare in Romania, a country riven by mountains that work to isolate one ethnic group from another. Thus last December, when the Communist authorities in Timisoara exiled Laszlo Tokes, a Hungarian pastor, for preaching against the regime, Romanians in Timisoara joined their fellow Hungarians in a protest, and a revolution was ignited. But elsewhere in Romania, Tokes is now considered a "Hungarian chauvinist," and many Romanians deny that Hungarians played any significant role in "their" revolution. Father Ion Bizau, a young Orthodox priest I befriended in Transylvania, laments: "Tokes is a hero, but no one will say a kind word about him. The truth is in our souls, but we are afraid to speak it. We are all guilty. We Romanians have become a spiritually disfigured people."

Aside from the Banat and a few university towns such as Bucharest and Cluj, Romania has yet to have even an uprising, let alone a full-fledged revolution. With the exception of these islands of relative sophistication, Romania is a sea of peasantry. The reduction of this peasantry to a mere biological existence, in which an independent human spirit has been extinguished, was a process begun by Turks and absentee Greek landlords in the Middle Ages, and finished by Communist Party chief Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and his successor after 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu. Ceausescu grew up in the Wallachian heartland of Oltenia, the poorest and most Oriental part of Romania, where centuries of Turkish plunder had psychologically brutalized the peasants; they became suspicious, cynical, and double-dealing as a means of survival. Ceausescu was a boy with a speech defect, one of many children of a drunken, abusive father. Self-hate may, therefore, have played a role in his all-consuming ambi-

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tion to destroy Romanian rural life. But Ceausescu's actions are also traceable to advice, reportedly given by Stalin to Gheorghiu-Dej in the late 1940s, to "keep the masses occupied" by giving them "big projects to do."

In 1949 work started on a canal linking the Danube River to the Black Sea, in which as many as 100,000 laborers may have died in the first four years of construction. In the 1960s gigantic iron, steelworks, and petrochemical plants began to be built in Moldavia and Wallachia, and mining operations were expanded in the Jiu Valley. Masses of peasants were forcibly conscripted for work, moved out of villages where their ancestors had lived for centuries—away from every tradition they ever had—and placed in grim dormitory communities. The result: a huge underclass, created and controlled by the regime, urbanized peasants who, as a local proverb put it, are "neither horse nor donkey."

I traveled for six weeks through Wallachia and the Danube Delta to investigate this underclass, after work discipline had broken down in the wake of the revolution. I encountered a surrealistic hell of rowdy alcoholism, with gangs of factory laborers living in dormitories away from their families and bereft of all pride, drinking medicinal alcohol when normal supplies run out and watching kung fu movies in cafés. The miners from the Jiu Valley who beat up the students in Bucharest come from this social substratum. Under Ceausescu they were given the minimum to eat and nearly worked to death. Ceausescu's neo-Communist successor, Ion Iliescu, has shown that if you give these Orwellian proles a bit more food to eat, they make an effective praetorian guard against urban intellectuals who seek real reform.

The atomization of society, scrupulously overseen by Ceausescu, has not only survived Timisoara's revolution but subverted it. The climate of suspicion is suffocating, and Romanians tend to believe the wildest rumors. For example, a young technician working on the Danube canal project to Cernovoda told me that "Ceausescu was not killed"—his "double" was—therefore "the real Ceausescu is being hidden somewhere." As Bram Stoker wrote in *Dracula*, "Every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the center of some sort of imaginative whirlpool." Indeed, political life is characterized by a peculiar mysticism and theatricality: the product of a Latin psyche, Byzantine traditions, and an Orthodox Christianity built upon the richest pagan folklore in Europe. "We need things to kiss and touch and feel," explains Poruciuc. Thus when Romanians saw Iliescu's image on the television screen last December, announcing the demise of Ceausescu, they kissed it. "Now Iliescu's image will be difficult to erase."

Romania has not yet turned a corner in its history. The revolution was portrayed as exceptional only because the journalists' reports from Bucharest lacked historical context. In fact, the December revolution and the subsequent miners' violence follow a pattern that is strikingly similar to events in Romania a half century ago. In September 1940 there was a popular uprising in Bucharest against the despotic King Carol II and his hated mistress, Elena Lupescu. When the couple fled, many Romanians demanded that they be caged, stripped naked, and paraded in the streets. The people swore that they would never again allow such a man and woman to misrule them. "Paraded naked" was the phrase used by more than a few Romanians when discussing the deserved fate of the Ceausescus.

Carol and his mistress escaped into exile. A syphilitic cavalry officer named Ion Antonescu then formed a government that included members of the fascist Legion of the Archangel Michael (whose military wing was known as the Iron Guard). Antonescu was hailed as a "national savior" by the peasants, just as they are now welcoming Iliescu's National Salvation Front. But the hysterical uprising unleashed new tyrannies. The Legion—which for years, with Nazi backing, had been blaming Romania's 900,000 Jews for everything that went wrong in the country—soon perpetrated what experts consider the single most ferocious act of the Holocaust. On January 22, 1941, the Legionnaires, after reciting religious hymns, brought 200 Jewish adults and some children as young as five to the Bucharest slaughterhouse. They were forced to strip naked in the freezing dark, and put through the automated stages of animal slaughter. According to witnesses the next morning, only blood-smeared torsos were left.

The massacre came in the midst of the Legionnaires' attempted putsch against Antonescu, who, by their lights, was not sufficiently fascist. But Antonescu prevailed: the Legionnaires went down fighting against his regular army troops and tanks in the wintry streets of Bucharest in exactly the same hell-bent manner as Ceausescu's Securitate did last December. Calling himself the *Conducator* (Romanian for "führer," a title Ceausescu would later appropriate), Antonescu then went on to commit even more sweeping atrocities.

Antonescu's actions were motivated not specifically by anti-Semitism but rather by Stalin's illegal annexation of the eastern half of Moldavia, known as Bessarabia, in June 1940. Antonescu's army joined the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union that began a year later. On June 25, 1941, as the Romanian army was crossing into Soviet territory, a wild rumor spread through Jassy, Moldavia's capital, that Soviet paratroopers had landed during the night and were hiding with Jewish families. This ignited a Romanian army pogrom, in which soldiers killed 4,000 Jews and crammed 8,000 others into padlocked cattle cars, to die of thirst and asphyxiation.

In Antonescu's eyes, the Jews living in the path of the Romanian army advance were a dangerous fifth column. In 1941 and 1942 he oversaw the deportation of 185,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bucovina—regions east and north of Romania—to Transdniestria in the western Ukraine, where forward units of the Romanian army set up the only non-German-run extermination camps during World War II. People were stripped naked in subzero temperatures and shot. When soldiers ran low on bullets, only adults were shot; children were

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buried alive. It was too much for Adolf Eichmann. He pleaded with Antonescu to halt the killings temporarily, so that the job could be done more cleanly by *Einsatzgruppen*, special SS murder squads. But the killings continued until the Battle of Stalingrad, from September 1942 to January 1943, a military turning point that made Antonescu realize the Germans might lose the war. "I will have a bad reputation for these terrible murders," he reflected. Thereafter, until he was toppled in August 1944, Antonescu cooperated with attempts to save Jews, and even to smuggle them to Palestine.

Antonescu need not have worried about his reputation. Executed in 1946 by the Communists, he is now being rehabilitated by some of the same Romanian students and intellectuals who are fighting for democracy. They consider Antonescu a "great patriot" for joining the Nazis when it was in Romania's interest to do so, and for laying the groundwork for fighting the Nazis when it became in Romania's interest to do that. The mass murders in the western Ukraine are now either denied or blamed on the Germans or Russians. "You will never convince me that even one Jew was ever harmed by a Romanian," said a Romanian teacher of English. A university student in Jassy said, "The Jews were not patriotic. Romania was allied with Nazi Germany, but Romanian Jews helped the Russians." Still another student, the son of a priest, told me that the Legion of the Archangel Michael "wanted to uplift and intensify our faith." The Orthodox Church, therefore, "need not feel too guilty" about its collaboration with the pro-Nazi terror organization.

Now as then, the issue that threatens to blow up the already violent political landscape is Moldavia. Jassy today is a hotbed of nationalist sentiment. Students at the university kept me up late into the night with stories about their parents and grandparents, born on the other side of the Prut River in Bessarabia. These students want Antonescu reinstated in the history books as a hero. They want the Soviet Union to collapse quickly and totally, so that "our brothers in Bessarabia can be reunited with us" and Romania will "never again" have its political culture influenced by the retrograde East.

Like intellectuals throughout Romania, they loathe the National Salvation Front. The Front, they point out, with its links to the Soviet Communist Party, is not sufficiently militant regarding the reunification of Bessarabia with the rest of Romania. The Front, moreover, has no real democrats, only Communist retreads like Iliescu, Prime Minister Petre Roman, and former ambassador to the United States Sylviu Brucan. Roman and Brucan are particularly despised, rightly seen as talented intellectuals who sold out to the Communists for the sake of career advancement. "I made a moral choice, Roman didn't. That's why I'm a poor lecturer and he is a prime minister," notes one Jassy intellectual. However, Roman and Brucan also happen to be Jews, and this too is pointed out, along with the fact that Antonescu is a hero, and that the Nazis and the Legion were not quite as terrible as Communist Party propaganda claimed. I do not believe that Jassy's intellectuals are anti-Semites. But under Ceausescu, they were repressed to a degree that anti-Communist dissidents elsewhere rarely were. Moldavia's geographical situation in Europe's outback, contiguous to the Ukraine, further isolates them. The prejudices of their parents and other relatives—who provided the only alternative source of historical information in the face of Communist propaganda—are another burden. And like other Romanians, they are prone to conspiracy-mongering and seem psychologically unable to confront their own history in its awful entirety. These intellectuals are like prisoners who desperately want to escape a moral darkness, but they are still not quite sure how.

Tolerance, because it is largely a function of middle-class values, is something foreign to even the most educated elements of Romanian society. Few Romanians have even a family memory of a middle-class existence, because the Romanian middle class was largely composed of ethnic Germans and Jews, almost all of whom Ceausescu sold as visa hostages to West Germany and Israel.

Romania is only the most extreme example of a sad but expected development: Europe is, in fact, not coming together at all. Rather, it is redividing. Instead of an ideological division between Eastern and Western halves, we now have the old geographical and cultural division between Central Europe and the Balkans. Not only in Romania, but in Bulgaria, Albania, and the southern two-thirds of Yugoslavia, Communist parties still desperately hang on to power—even if, as in Romania and Bulgaria, they have been freely elected under new names. Communism will not be buried in the Balkans until its peoples are able to confront and thus exorcise their historical ghosts, at least to the degree that the people of Central Europe have.

In Bucharest, at one end of Ceausescu's monstrous Civic Center, is the Church of Ilie Gorgani, where on November 30, 1940, the fascist Legionnaire leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was temporarily canonized as a national saint. Today, near the altar, is a flower-bedecked portrait of Teoctist, the head of the Orthodox Church in Romania, who was recently reinstalled in his position after being forced out of office in the wake of December's revolution: he is a man who has come to symbolize more than any other the Romanian Church's collaboration with the Ceausescu regime. At the other end of the Civic Center is the dreaded red brick slaughterhouse, now closed. January will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre of Jews there. Some sort of public remembrance is called for. Democracy in Romania will be a contrivance until the past is admitted, tolerance learned, and an authentic peasantry established through economic and social reform. Washing away the dragon's blood may take years.

ROBERT D. KAPLAN, the author of *Soldiers of God: With the Mujahidin in Afghanistan* (Houghton Mifflin), is writing a book on the Balkans.

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The Romanian opposition gets bashed.

HOMAGE TO GOLANIA

By Vladimir Tismaneanu

BUCHAREST

I went to Romania on June 9 expecting to witness some unpleasantness between the government and the opposition. The sit-in staged by students, workers, and intellectuals at University Square was approaching its third month, and President Ion Iliescu had not disguised his opinions of dissidents. Following his election on May 20, official publications of the National Salvation Front embarked on a smear campaign against independent intellectuals and magazines. Leaders of the opposition parties were accused of being on the payroll of Western secret services. Student leaders—particularly the charismatic Marian Munteanu, one of the main orators in University Square—were preposterously charged with having served as members of the Securitate during the Ceausescu regime. Still, I never could have anticipated the outburst of reactionary populism—indeed, a Stalinist-fascist orgy—I saw in Bucharest between June 13 and June 15.

The sit-in began during the election campaign, on April 24. In the drab world of Romania's pseudo-normalization (Iliescu ran under the slogan "a president for our peace of mind"), University Square had been a political bonfire of fantasy and inspiration. The original purpose of the demonstration was to demand enactment of Point 8 of the "Proclamation of Timisoara," which proposed that "the electoral law prohibit—for the first three consecutive legislatures—the right of former Communist activists and of former Securitate officers to run in elections." The demand was not met, and the former Communists of the NSF received a landslide vote in the election. Conceding defeat, the major organizations that had participated in this "Commune of Bucharest" moved out of the square, and by June the dwindling number of protesters were asking for little more than allowing one independent television station. But Iliescu refused to negotiate with his critics, denouncing them as *golani*—ruffians or tramps. (In response, supporters of the demonstrators dubbed the square Golania, the country of the *golani* and the "first zone free of neo-communism.") Iliescu need only have waited another week. The flickering anarchist fire in the heart of Bucharest was almost extinguished.

But at 4 a.m. on June 13 I was awakened at my hotel by Vasile Gogea, a philosopher and civic activist from Brasov, whom I had left an hour earlier. He urged me to go out to the street: "The civil war has started." The air smelled insufferably of disinfectant. Suddenly a group of plainclothed individuals commanded us to stop. Their arrogant, insulting behavior betrayed them as Securitate men, and they ordered us to go back to the hotel. In any case the road was blocked, and within minutes police trucks arrived in the square to dismantle the tents of the hunger strikers and the platform the demonstrators had erected for speeches. Protesters were beaten up and forcibly removed, and the hunger strikers were transported to unidentified army hospitals.

This proved to be only the first stage. It wasn't long before thousands of incensed citizens, mostly students, began demonstrating against the government's brutal evacuation of the square. Munteanu futilely implored the crowd to avoid violence. But there were apparently enough planted provocateurs to keep the mob's collective wrath roiling. (During the tumult pictures were taken in which former Securitate officers can be seen among the crowd.) As teenagers threw hundreds of Molotov cocktails at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Romanian Service of Information, the army made no effort to intervene. In a scene reminiscent of East Germany early this year, the mob stormed the former building of the Securitate, and a group of "demonstrators" set fire to the ninth floor—where the most sensitive files were stored. This appalling display of collective delirium continued for the next two days, a terrifying illustration of the nature of power in post-Ceausescu Romania.

Ceausescu's downfall was the result of two elements: a spontaneous, anti-Communist, and pro-Western social movement from below, and a long-planned coup d'état organized by a coalition of disenchanted Party apparatchiks, top Securitate officials, and some army generals. Iliescu's rise to prominence and the Front's hegemony were not the result of popular will but of the general confusion that followed the collapse of the Ceausescu regime. The ruling group is made up of committed Leninists, power-hungry technocrats, political adventurers, and demagogues, including some with criminal records. Add to this strange mixture some ecstatic idealists and ambitious political scientists, and you have a picture of the NSF pinnacle. I had two long conversations with the Front's acting chairman, Nicolae S. Dumitru, a romantic Marxist convinced that under his guidance the NSF would turn into a "party of incorruptibles." In a country where corruption, nepotism, and sordid intrigues are endemic, this sounded almost pathetic. As dissident writer Dorin Tudoran puts it, the interests of the popular uprising and the palace conspiracy were bound to collide.

To stay in power and stabilize his government, Iliescu clearly accepted a pact with the Securitate and the army, two forces directly implicated in the Timisoara massacres of December 1989: they would guarantee his power, in return for which he would ensure their survival. Then, under pressure from below, he initiated a partial purge of the secret police. The Securitate, however, refused to accept this humiliation and boycotted the democratic process by organizing a series of provoca-

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tions that came to a climax with the June uprising. It is very likely that its members exploited Iliescu's anguishes to prompt him into irrational actions.

Instead of using the legal tools at his command, Iliescu appealed to an extralegal force, the coal miners, giving them his presidential blessing to exert unbounded terror in Bucharest on June 14 and 15. While the official media were lambasting the opposition, the students, and the intellectuals for their alleged "Iron Guard" affiliations and for being morally responsible for the violence, the miners rampaged through the headquarters of the National Peasant and Liberal parties, savagely beat up the students, and ransacked the offices of independent newspapers. I saw them in full exercise of their mission, together with their civilian "coordinators," carrying lists of those who had dared to criticize the president, the prime minister, the NSF, and the official story about the Romanian revolution. According to *Romania Libera*, the country's largest independent daily, among the miners one could identify active members of the Securitate and of its so-called "special anti-terrorist units."

In addition to the better-known targets of repression, the regime used the miners to "cleanse" the Gypsy neighborhoods. Unlike the other victims, Gypsies have virtually no contact with the foreign media. According to an independent intellectual association, the Group for Social Dialogue, the government exploited a widespread chauvinism to accuse the Gypsies of having been an instrument of the "fascist" rebellion. After the pogroms and deportations Gypsies suffered during World War II, they were now victimized in the name of anti-fascism.

I was with some friends in the building of the Group for Social Dialogue when the miners arrived, accompanied by a delegate of the NSF-sponsored "Free Youth Foundation," the reincarnation of Nicu Ceausescu's Communist Youth Union. The only Group member present at the time was Gabriel Andreescu, a physicist and human rights activist persecuted by the Ceausescu regime. It was only thanks to his persuasive power that the miners left without serving us the lesson they had already administered to other designated victims of their "working-class justice," as the Front propaganda described it.

On June 16 I visited Munteanu at the Emergency Hospital. I found him smiling stoically, with a large wooden crucifix on his chest, his left leg broken, wounds on his skull, and marks of a monstrous whipping on his back. To his right was a young boy, unable to utter a word, completely smashed by torture. This living corpse was Munteanu's brother, whom the miners had taken for the student leader and treated accordingly—one of the many "errors" in Iliescu's search for what he called an "original democracy"—that is, a non-Western, non-pluralistic regime.

Munteanu told me that the police had asked him to go to University Square to calm down the demonstrators, and that he was later chased by miners as a "turbulent instigator." But before we could finish our conversation, we were informed that Vice Premier Cazimir Ionescu had called and threatened to have Munteanu removed to an army clinic if he continued to speak to foreign journalists. I left immediately, but the next day Munteanu was charged with "anti-state activities" and taken to a penitentiary hospital. As for the miners, they had left Bucharest after holding a huge meeting where Iliescu thanked them for their selfless commitment to the defense of Romania's "young democracy."

What was the purpose of the miners' vigilantism, and who inspired the clashes? In whose interest was it to create a state of general panic and unrest? According to Nicolae Manolescu, the editor of *Romania Literara* and one of the country's most influential intellectuals, there are three possible interpretations.

The first, propagated by Iliescu and Prime Minister Petre Roman, maintains that the miners pre-empted a fascist coup inspired by inimical foreign forces. Iliescu claims that his regime was threatened by a right-wing, Iron Guard-type rebellion, in which the independent groups that participated in the University Square meetings acted in accordance with a plan concocted by some unnamed Western spy agencies. In several discussions with top members of Iliescu's entourage, I heard the same leitmotiv: the University Square demonstrations were fomented by the West, which cannot resign itself to the victory of a left-of-center formation in an Eastern European country. Even some sophisticated political scientists among Iliescu's advisers refuse to admit that political opposition is a normal phenomenon within a democracy.

The second scenario, suggested by some opposition forces, sees the NSF as the chief culprit and responsible for the escalation of violence following the provocative evacuation of University Square. The whole spiral of violence, they say, is Iliescu's well-designed plan to monopolize power, compromise the opposition, and establish a neo-Communist dictatorship. But this scenario operates with the same demonic stereotypes as the government's: it attributes considerable imagination to its enemy, and it assumes that the government is indifferent to international opinion. It's unlikely that Iliescu and his supporters would have gone out of their way to create a situation that has isolated Romania nearly as totally as it was at the end of the Ceausescu regime.

The third and most convincing scenario is Manolescu's. In an article in *Romania Literara* he takes into account the existence of irrational forces both within the ruling team and among some opposition groups. There was no clear-cut government conspiracy, but there was a deliberate attempt by Securitate-linked top officials to contain and manipulate the discontent of certain social groups, primarily students, intellectuals, and some radical anti-Communists. Slander, distortion, and semantic fraud were used to fabricate the image of a beleaguered power. According to this interpretation, the "Proclamation of Timisoara" and the peaceful anti-government demonstrations in University Square reflected a real state of mind among large strata of the Romanian population. Far from having been inspired from abroad, the protests were homegrown and spontaneous in their anti-Communist ardor. At a certain mo-

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ment, however, elements of the former Securitate managed to infiltrate and manipulate these expressions of public dissatisfaction. Only this scenario, says Manolescu, explains why one could recognize former Securitate officers among both the demonstrators and the miners on June 13. The purpose of the Securitate was to arrest Romania's democratic evolution and force Iliescu to toughen his stance against the opposition.

What Manolescu fails to point out is that the Securitate has never been a monolithic organization. Even now there are two secret police organizations in Romania: one is subordinated to the defense minister, General Victor Stanculescu, Ceausescu's former military aide, who was entrusted with the protection of the Central Committee building in December 1989. (It was Stanculescu's treason that made possible Ceausescu's rapid capture, pseudo-trial, and execution in December 1989.) This faction of the Securitate would have a strong interest in helping Stanculescu establish a military dictatorship to suppress what they would label the "democratic anarchy." His strategy of destabilizing the government was seen at work in the June uprising, most obviously in the army's refusal to restore order.

Another faction is represented by the Romanian Service of Information (SRI), headed by Virgil Magureanu, a former political science professor at the Communist Party school and an Iliescu loyalist. Created in March 1990, following ethnic strife between Hungarians and Romanians in Tirgu-Mures, the SRI can best be described as Iliescu's personal secret police. It is very likely that the SRI was instrumental in organizing the miners' retaliations. Nobody else could have provided the miners with lists of names, addresses, and pictures of all opponents of the Iliescu regime.

My hypothesis is that the succession of bloody events in mid-June cannot be understood without reference to the personal conflict between Iliescu and Stanculescu, as well as to the role played by the different factions of the secret police. Since this struggle has not come to an end, new outbursts of violence can be predicted. In all of the current political confusion, one thing is now apparent: Iliescu has lost control of the country. Stanculescu rules the army and may yet prove himself powerful enough to launch a coup; and Magureanu's faction is practicing the old techniques of diversion and deception, enhancing a state of hysteria. So long as Iliescu and the Front continue to be at the mercy of this political mafia, rejecting the spirit of dialogue and resorting to assault squads to silence the opposition, no genuine democratization can take place. Until then, the very mention of a state of law in Romania will remain an embarrassing joke.

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Insolvency, the overclass, and Bush's Thermidor.

CHAPPED LIPS

By Sidney Blumenthal

Early one evening in 1983 David Stockman and Richard Darman dropped in for a drink at Daniel Patrick Moynihan's townhouse on East Capitol Street. Stockman, who as a Harvard Divinity School student had babysat for the Moynihan children, was now the director of the Office of Management and Budget; Darman, also a Harvard acquaintance of Moynihan's, was now the deputy to White House chief of staff James Baker. The two friends were the Saint-Just and the Talleyrand of the Reagan revolution. But the economy was not following their program, which had promised, among other things, fabulous budget surpluses. Instead, a gaping deficit had opened up. And yet Stockman, in an expansive mood, began to boast of its wondrous political effects: the Democrats hopelessly entangled in the knots of the budget; the very idea of affirmative government besmirched; the ideological victory of conservatism made permanent. What's more, according to Moynihan, Stockman and Darman claimed to have planned these consequences.

Taking them at their word, the senator began to argue publicly that the deficit, which had frustrated social policy and political debate, was an act of deliberate calculation. He even wrote a book, *Came the Revolution*, to sound the alarm, which mostly went unheard. "There was no 'mishap' in the first six months of 1981," wrote Moynihan. "There was a conspiracy that both succeeded and failed." Intentionally or not, the American government had been rendered insolvent. Social reform was an unthinkable expense, massive borrowing was increasingly subsidized by our trading rivals, and politics was circumscribed within a narrow orbit in

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which the Republicans ruled. Insolvency became the linchpin of the GOP advantage. "No new taxes" locked it in place.

This summer George Bush has finally gotten caught in the springs of his own trap. When he felt himself forced to call for new taxes, something he vowed would never happen, he opened a deep fissure in American politics. Issues have surfaced that had been submerged in the regime of insolvency. The distribution of wealth, which had been an especially forbidden subject, is now freely argued. The 1980s are ending with harsh abruptness, as if some unseen arm was sweeping the decade's detritus off the table. Within a week of Bush's announcement, *Manhattan,inc.* folded; Donald Trump, emperor of a hollow raj, was put on an allowance by his creditors; and Coniston Partners, a high-flying leveraged buyout outfit, crashed. The entrepreneurial heroes of the early 1980s are now being excoriated as economic vultures. Those who flaunted the gaudy accumulation of nonproductive capital in the Reagan era are now a focus of resentment and derision. As if to ice the moment, it has been announced that the September hearings into Neil Bush's financial chicanery at Silverado Savings and Loan will be open to the public and press, just in time to set the tone for the midterm elections.

"Read my lips: no new taxes," George Bush told the GOP convention in 1988, reading Peggy Noonan's script. With that line he recommitted himself to the illusion that no new revenues were needed to cope with volcanic social problems and economic pressures. Taking office, he added a corollary: "We have more will than wallet." With that line he inaugurated a politics of no expectations.

Luckily for Bush, just as his presidency began, the contentious Democratic leader of the House of Representatives, Speaker Jim Wright, resigned trailing clouds of scandal. In Wright's place came Tom Foley, reasonable to a fault, devoted to bipartisan understanding. With Foley presiding in the House and George Mitchell, the prudential erstwhile judge, in the Senate, a kind of coalition government—an alliance of incumbents—was established. By dealing with his coalition partners, who saw themselves as responsible for the success of government, not as oppositionists, Bush was mostly able to avoid abrasive conflicts.

At the gala fund-raiser for the Democrats sponsored by Pamela Harriman, held in late June at the Kennedy Center, Dana Carvey of "Saturday Night Live" played Bush as the master of ceremonies for the evening. Carvey-Bush said he had come to "recognize the loyal opposition—it is much more loyal than opposition." The 3,000 celebrants were stone silent for a few stunned seconds; the comedian had touched on the central problem of the congressional Democrats. Then there was a smattering of tentative applause and uncomfortable, forced laughter.

On issue after issue, from civil rights to the spotted owl, the Bush method rarely deviated. The president postponed, hesitated, and then split the difference, always seeking safe political ground. His administration was a trading company. The agenda, shifting day by day, was dictated by the next deal and its adjustments. In the meantime, as Gorbachev made the hard decisions in the world, Bush effortlessly rose in popularity until he topped 80 percent. A bland triumphalism settled over Washington. The dominant feeling inspired by the politics of no expectations was not dissociated optimism, the essential Reagan quality, but futility. With such a thin wallet, the sense of possibility was flattened. Nothing, after all, could really be done. Since it was useless to argue, the Democrats continued to flounder for a rationale. Politics itself seemed obsolescent.

But as the consequences of Reaganism at last made themselves felt—the bill for the S&L scandal, the expanding external debt—a budget summit with the congressional leadership convened. At the summit Bush, pinioned between his no-taxes pledge and his need to maintain the coalition government that kept politics restricted to shuttle diplomacy along Pennsylvania Avenue, initially took a position of no position. His strategy, the Democrats feared, was one of "plausible deniability," so that he could blame them when taxes were inevitably raised. The strain in the room was over his pose of invisibility. At the first meeting in May, Mitchell urged him to assume leadership. The S&L scandal, Mitchell said, had pushed the budget—and the economy—to the edge of a crisis. It was the president's role to explain why a plan that included taxes was necessary.

The Republicans knew that the impending disaster could not be dispelled by projections of optimism, the Reaganite mind cure; for if the summit failed, $100 billion would be sequestered, in accordance with the draconian Gramm-Rudman strictures. This would almost certainly lead to a recession. Privately, OMB director Darman worried whether the economic slide could be halted, and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady voiced fear of collapsing markets. But Bush was not about to explain all this in a televised address. "I'm not going to go out there and scare the market," the president told Mitchell, according to a participant in the meeting.

But panic about the economy was seeping into the White House. On June 26 Bush felt compelled to issue his spare, four-sentence declaration in favor of "tax revenue increases." His original formulation of the statement was diffident and impersonal. "It is clear that . . ." it said. Only the insistence of the Democrats made him add whom it was clear to: "to me." Bush was banking on peace and prosperity as his re-election themes for 1992. Gorbachev had given him peace; perhaps the congressional Democrats could give him prosperity. He saw no other way to preserve the status quo: no recession, no expectations, no politics.

Instead, the president's utterance on taxes touched off an ideological cataclysm. By saying "tax revenue increases" he broke the spell of "read my lips." He had cracked the rhetorical structure of Reaganism—its

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imputation of troubles to the demented gloominess of partisan opponents, its claim that government can do no good, its confusion of symbolism with action. Inadvertently, Bush opened up the discussion of fundamental public questions: Who pays? Who benefits? In an instant, politics was reborn. After "to me," the deluge.

In the immediate aftermath a compelling story of class polarization during the Republican period made an exquisitely timed appearance in the bookstores. The controversial thesis of *The Politics of Rich and Poor* gained credibility not only from its voluminous statistics but from the identity of its author: Kevin Phillips, the wunderkind political demographer in the 1968 Nixon campaign and prophetic author of *The Emerging Republican Majority*. The Republican cycle, wrote Phillips, had tilted "power, policy, wealth, and income toward the richest portions of the population," and had fostered "a rising imperative for a new political and economic outlook."

The apostate's emphasis on economic privilege was what Michael Dukakis had punctiliously avoided until the dying days of his campaign. Now the Republicans denounced Phillips as a traitor, while Democrats diligently studied his manifesto, to learn from a Republican strategist their own roots. Phillips's argument was marred by a few simplifications of history, particularly a romanticization of populism. (See "The Hidden Role of Race" by Thomas Byrne Edsall, page 35.) And his claim of discontinuity between Nixon and Reagan, the former appealing to middle-class resentment against the establishment and the latter merely serving the parvenus, deprived Nixon of the credit he merits for laying the groundwork for Reagan.

Reagan, after all, also appealed to "us" (the squeezed middle class) versus "them" (the undeserving poor). One of the hallmarks of the 1980s was the hegemonic conservative doctrine that liberal policies had institutionalized an underclass whose fecklessness was the source of its poverty. Now there was a new "them," a new focus for an anxious middle class in search of an explanation. Ralph Whitehead, a social analyst and professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, has coined a name for this new "them": the overclass.

The overclass is the distorted mirror image of a caricature of the underclass. It is not the old establishment of Prescott Bush, George's father; it is, rather, the demimonde of rentiers who, under Reagan, elbowed their way to the top, where they hastily built mahogany-paneled offices to create an aura of settled legitimacy. This overclass piled up vast wealth shuffling junk bonds, paper assets, and real estate. Its monuments are not factories but Atlantic City casinos and boarded-up department stores. The overclass battened under Reagan; under Bush it sought to consolidate its respectability.

Instead, almost overnight, members of the overclass appeared beleaguered, forlorn, and shiftless—the executives of S&Ls, the junk bond promoters, Trump himself, even the president's son Neil. ("It's not been easy for him," Bush explained. "He's probably the most sensitive of our four boys—maybe second most sensitive.") As the creditors banged on their doors, an atmosphere of permissiveness was blamed for their plight. In an eerie reversal of liberal excuse-mongering, they have attempted to portray themselves as victims of society, unfortunates to whom the middle class (the salaried taxpayers, the small depositors) owes a living. It isn't flying.

By the accident of its publication date, coinciding with Bush's erasure of his main campaign promise, Phillips's book became a political event. The realignment of income to the upper reaches is the touchstone of the controversy about new taxes, and entwined around it is the S&L debacle. While both Democrats and Republicans have been touched by this scandal, the impetus for deregulation, which allowed the bankers to play fast and loose, came from the Republicans. The Democrats' motives were favors, quid pro quos, cash—traditional values, as it were. For the Republicans, however, the issue was also a matter of ideology, an article of faith. "This is one place where water rolls downhill for the Democrats," says Representative Charles Schumer, a Democrat who has been in the forefront on the issue. "Democrats let it happen, but this was Republican philosophy."

Nervous Republicans understand that in the tax and related S&L imbroglio nothing less than the stability of their political base is at stake. "The fault line in the party has fallen along class lines," says Representative Vin Weber, an important conservative in the House. "The upwardly mobile middle class is the core constituency of the Republican Party. . . . The party organization has told candidates out in the field: start your campaign on the no-tax pledge. National security is in eclipse; begin with the no-tax pledge; tag your opponent with the tax increase label. Add a few bells and whistles, like flags, maybe you'll win. We've told the candidates no taxes is *the* one thing. Now they're asked why our president is on the other side." The GOP, according to Weber, may be fracturing on a whole range of issues along this class line. "The people who rallied to this cause [taxes] are established, monied people," he says, an implicit criticism of Bush, Darman, and Brady. "It fits what's happening on social issues. The upper-class Republicans have always been hostile to the [right-wing] social agenda. Now they're getting organized as 'Republicans for Choice.' There's potential for a schism, maybe a big schism."

Stricken with anxiety and a rising sense of betrayal, Republicans lined up to denounce Bush's three words. Ninety in the House signed a letter that bluntly stated: "A tax increase is unacceptable." Even if Bush were to make a deal with the Democrats, which would almost certainly require accepting higher income taxes on the wealthiest, it is uncertain that he can deliver a majority of his own party. "It is not a foregone conclusion," says Weber coolly.

Though the Republicans feel as though the floor has fallen out from under them, they are hoping that some-

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how political centrifugal force will hold them up, even if they are pressed against the sides of a spinning wall. Communism, flags, abortion, now taxes—all are anachronisms or compromised. Still, besides money, which despite its reputation for talking cannot invent a new political theme, the Republicans have an enormous resource upon which to draw. "The only thing that keeps me from being pessimistic is the Democrats," says Weber. "You can't underestimate the ability of the Democrats to blow this. They're going to save us. It works with boring consistency."

Throughout 1990 the congressional Democratic leadership has successfully defended the status quo of insolvency under the rubric of bipartisan "responsibility." But Bush's Thermidor has cast the Democrats as well as the Republicans into a new phase of politics. Just as the president may have great difficulty rallying his party's minions to a budget deal, so might the Democratic leaders have trouble lining their troops in a column. The Democrats in the House, especially, have had a good measure of their morale restored after defeating the flag amendment. The day after Bush's statement, the Democratic Study Group released a letter to Speaker Foley signed by 134 members saying that new taxes placing a "further burden on [working- and middle-class] families rather than the very wealthy will not receive support within the Democratic caucus and should not be supported by House negotiators."

"Raising taxes is not necessarily a concession to Democrats," says Representative Robert Torricelli, who believes that Bush's Thermidor is merely the prelude to a deepening and extended crisis. If the new revenues are only used for an S&L bailout and to "postpone cutting the military industrial complex," it would simply be "another transfer of wealth." Schumer says flatly that if the income tax rate on the wealthiest is not raised, the very line that Republicans are determined not to cross, "there won't be a deal." And if a majority of Republicans fail to signal that they will support such a deal, he added, the Democrats alone wouldn't save Bush. "A conundrum," Schumer calls it.

Even with the dreaded sequestration looming, the conflict seems irrepressible. "George Bush is not going to engineer his own recession," says Torricelli. "We're in a game where he holds very few cards. It's an equal game only if we decide to give him some of our cards." But that requires the nerve to face sequestration (and the political heat for the chaos that might follow) without flinching, without giving in to the impulse to be "responsible." "If we won't accept sequestration, we have no card to play," says Representative Richard Durbin, a centrist Democrat. "There will be a lot of pressure [from the leadership] to preserve the [bipartisan] coalition. But I would guess most Democrats would hold their ground."

Even if the leadership does strike a deal and persuades the caucus that accepting an unholy compromise is more politic than allowing sequestration, the issue of the distribution of post-Reagan wealth will not vanish. The momentum will move away from the congressional Democrats, as to a degree it already has. "Phillips says convincingly what Democrats have not been bold enough to say and Republicans won't admit: we have redistributed our wealth from the poor and working middle class to the rich," reads a blurb on the back of Phillips's book, signed Mario Cuomo. In the event of a narrowly balanced deal, the bipartisan coalition would have incubated the conditions for an anti-establishment presidential candidacy, formed outside Washington and organized around the economic issue. This hypothetical candidacy and the politics of hostility to economic privilege that would fuel it, however, have not yet combusted. The match that would ignite the flame would be an economic downturn.

Preventing such a conflagration is a large part of Bush's ambition in the budget summit. But even were he to forge the agreement he wishes, his remedy might not turn out to be a solution at all, but gasoline on the fire. Combining regressive taxes with slashes in spending could be a neo-Hooverist design that would stymie demand just when a stimulus is needed. Another difficulty: Bush is racing to achieve his program so that the Federal Reserve will lower interest rates. But the gigantic deficit that Bush is floating depends upon foreign banks willing to finance it by buying Treasury notes. If U.S. interest rates fall too low, they may not attract the essential capital: for German interest rates are pegged attractively high to gain the vast sums required for the work of unification.

Bush is acting against huge forces that are accelerating. He must cope with his predecessor's blithe Faustian trade of U.S. economic independence and solvency for his political success. In the meantime, the collapse of communism has triggered unexpected contradictions of capitalism. Even worse news: should Bush safely steer his powerboat through the straits of Scylla and Charybdis, he must repeat the feat again next year.

"Ideology matters," Bush said time and again in his 1988 campaign. But ideology to him was like team spirit. Now he has abandoned many of the old cheers and yells. What he has left are his managerial and diplomatic skills. He rests his presidency on Michael Dukakis's theme: competence. As Dukakis proved, there is no word in the political language less arousing, less evocative, less repercussive. Holding a majority for the Republicans requires unvarnished results in keeping the business cycle at bay. The expectations now placed on Bush are piling up with every item of disquieting economic news.

In the same convention speech in which he read Noonan's famous "read my lips" phrase, Bush also read another line about taxes: "My opponent now says he'll raise them as a last resort, or a third resort. Well, when a politician talks like that, you know that's one resort he'll be checking into." But it is Bush who has checked in and who finds himself standing in the lobby with his baggage. More than the honeymoon is over. •

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A brief history of the end of time.

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FANTASIES

By Hillel Schwartz

It was the end of the century. The world was in chaos. Nations worked furiously to subvert other nations. Men and women were confused about their place and purpose. Myriad were the double agents, impostors, and traitors who reveled in the tumult. Even the faithful were corrupt.

According to tradition, the Mahdi, or "rightly guided one," would appear at century's end to redirect a decadent society, to refresh the faithful and restore their sense of purpose. Sure enough, during the last year of the century, the people deposed a tyrant and rededicated themselves under the guidance of a holy man from a holy city. In the last month of the last year, armed students occupied a mansion of foreign dissimulators, whom they took as hostages to the new age. On New Year's Day, 1 Muharram (November 21), the people held demonstrations in support of their inspired leader. That week Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini urged the Revolutionary Council to raise an army of 20 million men to defend Iran's borders from American invasion.

At the time the American media paid no heed to the fact that it was a new century A.H., exactly 1,400 years after the Hejira (Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina). Nor did the networks note that Islamic excitements about a new century had in the past set the scene for wholly new dynasties (the Fatimids in Egypt in the tenth century A.D.; the Safavids in Iran in the sixteenth century A.D.), and had provided the momentum for such Mahdist movements as that which defeated the troops of British military hero Charles George Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 A.D.

If the fin-de-siècle angle on the Iranian revolution escaped foreign observers, this was because similarly powerful centurial expectations, oriented to the year 2000, were already current throughout the world in 1979. Although no Mahdi was scheduled to appear at this cul-de-sac of the Western Christian calendar, politicians, economists, and moral philosophers alike were calling for newly charismatic national leaderships. Despite ourselves, we shared with resurgent Islam many of the same anxieties about pollution and decay at century's end, many of the same desires for purification and rejuvenation at century's turn.

For the West, in fact, these last years have come to seem a now-or-never time. The Nineties, in particular 1999 and 2000, are not simply numerological curiosities; they are critical markers on which we have come to lay our cultural bets. Either the Nineties will see the Politics of Desperation and the twenty-first century the Era of Annihilation, as political scientist Richard Falk has written, or with futurist Alvin Toffler we will master *The Third* (and glorious) *Wave*. Nostradamus, the sixteenth-century astrologer to French kings, with characteristically enigmatic language, foresaw that in

> The year 1999, seven months,
> From the sky will come a great King of terror,
> To resuscitate the great King of Angoulmois;
> Before, after, Mars will reign by good luck,

a quatrain now frequently interpreted to mean that war at our century's end could be followed by the grand fortune of a world turned perfectly sweet.

Biblical fundamentalists, using scriptural clues in Daniel and the Book of Revelation, claim now more than ever to hear the hoofbeats of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—War, Plague, Famine, and Death—galloping toward the Armageddon climax of our century, after which the faithful (safely aloft in their Rapture) will return to enjoy a glorious millennial Sabbath peace. New Age astrologers foresee psychic anguish, earthquakes, and economic collapse before we can be anointed by Aquarius the Water-Carrier, who around 2000 will become the pre-eminent zodiacal influence upon our lives and so lead us into the gentle governance of a New, harmonic, ecumenical Age. More down to earth, the world's scientists urge us to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions before we poison ourselves by century's end, while President Bush has promised us clean air by century's turn. Some 6 billion people will be either suffocating or celebrating on—or off—this greenhouse Earth in the year 2000.

But the year 2000 stands as more than a mere culmination of yet another fin de siècle. It is the end of a thousand years, the second such calendrical millennium since anyone began counting by years anno Domini, and—by virtue of an official secular calendar shared worldwide only since the Russian and Chinese revolu-

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tions—the first that will be universally acknowledged. The terminal year is the pivot for planning commissions everywhere, even in Iran, whose ministry during the first year of the revolution established a twenty-two-year plan for taking the new Islamic society into the new (by Christian reckoning) century. Further, by virtue of new technologies, this century's (and millennium's) end will be the first celebrated globally and instantaneously.

At least one group has already begun planning our global celebration. Founded by a group of Yale graduates of the class of '79 who realized that their twentieth reunion would fall in 1999, the Millennium Society on December 21, 1999, will bring together aboard the *Queen Elizabeth II* some 2,000 of the world's "most inspiring" people. While other Society members gather at Stonehenge, Machu Picchu, and the Great Wall of China, the Inspired will sail from New York to the land of the pharaohs for a joyful midnight festival lasting through dawn on January 1, 2000, in the shadows of the Great Pyramid, already reserved. Among those invited on the millennial cruise are Ronald Reagan, George Bush, George Burns, Deng Xiaoping, Bruce Springsteen, Desmond Tutu, and Steven Spielberg. Five thousand "consummate optimists" strong and growing, the Society has already hosted charity balls on every New Year's Eve since the one foretokening Orwell's 1984. Charity funds have gone to endow a Millennium Scholars Program, "something of a Rhodes scholars program for a new century," intended to advance the cause of international peace and understanding from a chiefly Young Republican prospective.

The phrase itself, "fin de siècle," referring to an era at once manic and menacing, is scarcely a century old. As a coherent experience, as a recurrent Western phenomenon, the fin de siècle cannot easily be applied to the end of the first calendrical millennium A.D., when few people in Christendom were counting off the years by sequential hundreds. We who imagine 2001 as a Stanley Kubrick/Arthur C. Clarke collaboration have been more than willing to believe that the people of the "Dark Ages" must have trembled in their thin boots at the penumbral edge of the first millennium A.D., and that once safely past the hurdle of that terrible fin de siècle, they must have spontaneously thrown off the iron shackles of superstition and begun inventing the Renaissance. Generations of European and American medievalists have tried to persuade us otherwise, arguing that they find no evidence of mass panic during the 990s, no eruption of apocalyptic treatises, little concern on anyone's part for the passage from anno Domini DCCCCXCIX to M.

In fact, there is little European evidence of a truly centurial excitement until 1300, the first end of a Christian century that was publicly and explicitly celebrated as a century's end. Partly as a means toward the political exaltation as well as financial renovation of Rome, Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Papal Jubilee for that year. Pilgrims who made designated rounds of Roman churches during 1300 would have the length of their trials in purgatory reduced as completely as was in the pope's power. The Jubilee pilgrimage promised a sabbatical from the consequences of venial sin.

Later popes would institute Jubilees every fifty and then every twenty-five years, but the major Jubilee was always planned for century's turn, to last the full year. Gradually, secular society would also rest its hopes for salvation on centuries' turns, noting how chaos so frequently clustered toward the end, then forecasting social and political renewal on the cusp beyond. If Rome had no Jubilee in 1400 (when the Great Schism set pope against counter-pope against anti-pope), still there were white-robed pilgrims walking in long flagellant processions through Italy during the latter days of 1399 in full expectation of penitential release and universal peace.

On the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of Jesus, when the German artist Albrecht Dürer painted his seminal self-portrait as a frontal Christ challenging the world, he was announcing literally and iconographically that he had in this centurial year entered adulthood, then set at age twenty-eight, and become a humanist dedicated to the resurrection of a Golden Age. The deeply autobiographical connection drawn by Dürer between the stages of his life and an "arbitrary" calendrical marker was a striking example of the way Europeans had come to claim a personal stake in the tether and twist of standard A.D. centuries. The portrait itself was also in striking contrast to Dürer's famous woodcut of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, completed in 1498 at exactly the same time that Girolamo Savonarola, fervent preacher of a Florentine New Jerusalem, was being burned at the stake for having led the city toward apocalyptic chaos rather than heavenly coronation. The New World that Savonarola had anticipated for century's turn was instead painted as Neoplatonic allegory by Sandro Botticelli in his *Nativity* of 1500 and discovered in all of its confusingly primitive glory by Cristoforo Colombo, who at century's end signed himself, with implicitly millenarian intent, the "Christ-bearer."

During the Reformation, Protestants and then Catholics began to organize their church histories by sequential centuries A.D., such that each hundred years from the '01 through the '00 had an apparent coherence. For both Reformers and Counter-Reformers, the year 1600 was widely expected to be millennial. In 1559 Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's right-hand man, put the apocalyptic powers Gog and Magog in command of Germany by 1600. In 1599 Tommaso Campanella, who would soon compose the important utopian tract *The City of the Sun*, plotted with other Dominican monks and Italian bandits an uprising meant to inaugurate the millennium in, explicitly, the centurial year 1600. Giordano Bruno, polymath, magician, braggart, and hermetic philosopher, returned to his native Italy in 1591 after years of European exile, believing the time was ripe for worldwide religious reform and an irenic if still Catholic Church. Hoping for a universal peace, dreaming of infinite worlds beyond this one, Bruno was burned at the stake as a heretic and centurial example on February 17, 1600. The years be-

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fore and around 1600 are indeed the first years to be regularly described as a fin de siècle, distinguished not only by a Jubilee geared to the New Style (Gregorian) calendar but also by the emotional New Music of Italian opera and the New Astronomy of Johannes Kepler. Drawn by the abundant rumors of celestial disaster and grand projects for world renewal during the 1590s, modern historians have chronicled the desperate intensity of the epoch's ambivalence between apocalypse as ruin and apocalypse as revelation.

By the 1690s the end of the century was of sufficient concern to elicit the first public debates over its exact end, even though international events at the time were a dud. German and French scholars and pamphleteers lit the kindling for the flames of a controversy that has raged at the end of every century since: Does the new century begin with the '00 or the '01? (Technically, it begins with the '01. Since our A.D. calendar has no year zero, the conclusion to any standard sequential century is the last day of the centurial year itself. Such technical accuracy, however, is at odds with the way we count ages, money, or miles, and the change of initial numerals from, say, 1999 to 2000 is far more appealing as a dividing line than the relatively minor change from, say, 2000 to 2001. Arithmetically, the twenty-first century begins on January 1, 2001, but many will no doubt be unable to resist celebrating the new century on New Year's Eve, 1999/2000.)

During the eighteenth century Europeans and colonists in the Americas began speaking of themselves as personally aligned with the entire run of the century into which they were born. They believed they were creatures of their century, with whose spirit they were willy-nilly invested. The century had at last a *zeitgeist*, which reflected and informed the lives of its natives. When the French Revolution after 1789 deepened the centurial divide between the ancien régime and the "modern" world of the next, the nineteenth century, Romantics began to write of a *mal du siècle*, a motion sickness caused by the tumultuous change in centuries. The stark brutalities and reversals of the French Revolution encouraged a habit of historical comparison between the end of one century and the start of the next.

Oscillating wildly between the fin de siècle extremes of panic and panacea, the French Revolution was experienced and described as either the herald of the Millennium (by French Catholic prophet Suzette Labrousse) or the onslaught of apocalypse (by English conservative Edmund Burke). Prophets of universal regeneration or universal conflagration kept one eye upon the phases of the Revolution and the other upon the end of the century, looking for the most convincing symbolic conjunctions between calendar and crisis. It was fitting, then, that Franz Joseph Hayden should complete his oratorio, *The Creation*, in 1799, and that it should have its French premiere on January 1, 1801. *The Creation* was the capstone to century's end and foundation stone to the new century, moving as it did from the dissonance of "Chaos" to the love duet of Adam and Eve and a hymn of thanksgiving in the Garden of Eden.

The Paris Exhibition of 1900 was meant as something of an electrical Garden of Eden, demonstrating the tremendous industrial and scientific progress of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, feelings of unaccustomed technological acceleration prompted as much fatigue and "hysteria" as energy and euphoria, as much colonial unrest as colonial expansion, as many labor strikes and attempted assassinations as oil strikes and new inventions. The expression "fin de siècle" made its debut by 1886 more as a sickness than as an excitement. "To be fin de siècle," explained one French article, "is to be no longer responsible; it is to resign oneself in a nearly fatal fashion to the influence of the times and environs. . . . It is to languish with one's century, to decay along with it." The key words of the times were decadence and degeneration; the environs were inhabited by vampires, femmes fatales, sphinxes, sirens. If the British government in 1888 forecast in a semiofficial report that at *The Dawn of the Twentieth Century* "our vast Colonial Commonwealth [will be] consolidated and secure," there were more than fifty widely popular published scenarios of the grim (world) war on the horizon, itself blazing with aerial bombardments.

So Austrian Baroness Bertha von Suttner in 1889 called upon men to *Lay Down Your Arms*, and the World Peace Movement was organized. In 1898 Czar Nicholas II, surprising especially the Germans, issued an invitation to an international peace conference, which would be held the following year in The Hague's Summer Palace. "This conference should be, by the help of God," wrote the czar in his circular, "a happy presage for the century which is about to open. It would converge in one powerful focus the efforts of all States which are sincerely seeking to make the great idea of universal peace triumph over the elements of trouble and discord."

This attempt to round off the century into a political millennium failed, as we who have lived through the 60 million war deaths of the twentieth century surely know, but those who convened at The Hague were confident that they had inaugurated "a new era in the history of international relations between civilized peoples." Such rhetoric, common to diplomats on any given day, was nonetheless peculiarly compatible with the award of the first Peace Prize, given in 1901 by Alfred Nobel, inventor and manufacturer of high explosives. And it was a rhetoric peculiarly compatible with Leo Tolstoy's 1905 essay on "The End of the Age," in which the planet's most famous pacifist warned the Christian nations that if they were to survive the twentieth century they must abandon the mean fictions of State and Fatherland for the true principles of cooperation and love.

Others, meanwhile, were looking ahead to the advent of the twenty-first century. The year 1900, it seemed to some, was only the teaser to a prepotent twentieth century and the great year 2000. Henry Adams, discerning a Law of Acceleration in the technological progress of the world, calculated that "at the rate of progress

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since 1800 [to 1900], every American who lived in the year 2000 would know how to control unlimited power." That year 2000 was also the fin-de-siècle site for Edward Bellamy's cooperative utopia, William Morris's socialist revolution, Winnifred H. Cooley's feminist welfare state, and John Jacob Astor's Terrestrial Axis Straightening Company, which promised to maintain even temperatures at each degree of earthly latitude.

The twentieth century, and pre-eminently the year 2000, had long been set up for the rhetoric of new eras, new ages, New Jerusalems. Martin Luther expected the end of the world by the year 2000 at the latest, reasoning that if a day was as a thousand years in the sight of the Lord (Psalms 90:4) and Creation took six days, then the world as we know it should follow the divine pattern and last six 1,000-year days before its seventh, or sabbatical, day—the Millennium. Since, as Luther figured, Jesus had arrived on earth 3,960 years after the Creation, slightly ahead of the round-numbered year 4000, so the Second Coming would likely begin before the round-numbered year 6000, or close to 2000 A.D. It took only Archbishop Ussher's early-seventeenth-century computation of a Year 1 of the World equivalent to 4004 B.C. to establish a fully persuasive symmetry: 2,000 years from Creation to Abraham; another 2,000 years from Abraham to Jesus; a final 2,000 years from Jesus to the Millennium.

For evangelist Hal Lindsey, everything about the year 2000 seemed to be coming together when the State of Israel was established in 1948 (nine years after the Jewish calendar's turn of the century, its year 5700 tragically coincident with September 14, 1939). Scripture mathematicians in 1948 rushed to reread Matthew 24, wherein Jesus promised that upon the return of the Jews to their homeland the signs of the Latter Days would be seen in short order—war, chaos, consternation, and then the "Son of man coming in the clouds and heaven" within a generation's time. After Israeli troops occupied the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, Lindsey was delighted; now the Jews could start to rebuild their Temple and Bible prophecies could be counted down to their millennial terminus around the end of his generation, that is, the end of our century. By 2000 we could expect famines and plagues across the globe, crime in the streets and deceit in the hearts of the faithless, and a likely cold war heated up to fever pitch on the desolate plains of Megiddo in Israel, where the armies of the world would encounter at last the splendid generalship of Jesus.

Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth* sold more copies during the 1970s and 1980s than any other book (except the Bible) printed in the West, perhaps because his scenario fit so well the cultural frame for the fin de siècle: a period of decadence, disaster, and despair near century's end, succeeded by triumph and transformation at century's turn. That we have been preparing for the end of our century further in advance than people in any other century means that those Manichaean tensions common to fin-de-siècle experience will be aggravated: the fiercest fears of moral decay and global devastation; the most outrageous visions of spiritual transformation and international cooperation.

Our fin de siècle, however, has so far been strangely elliptical—with one focus on the Orwellian year 1984 and the other on the year 2000. A twenty-first-century historian's account of apocalyptic texts and warnings would show one peak in 1983, another in the years 1998-99. During the interim, we have the revolutions of 1989/90 in Eastern Europe, where apocalypse seems to have been swept aside but the Millennium, that thousand years of peace and harmony, has yet to be fixed.

The revolutions of 1989/90 may be "anniversary reactions" to the French Revolution, whose slogans and banners were also waved by the Chinese students of Tiananmen Square, but the present tumult in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union illustrates the more general historical experience of fin-de-siècle anxieties and expectations. On the one hand, there is despair over economies gone sour and outrage against the decadence of former leaders; on the other, there is a sense that metamorphosis can happen at once. Soon there is sure to be disappointment, as there always is at centuries' turns, when the metamorphosis is less thorough or less curative than it must be to match the magical metamorphosis of nines into zeroes.

The characteristic images of suddenness and totality at century's end may appear as threatening as they are enchanting. If we have now made it past the apocalyptic totalitarian mirage of 1984 into an era of ostensible democracy, we have not escaped those passionate concerns about limits that arise at century's end. Out of such panic comes a newly inflamed desire for ecological balance. What we do to our rain forests, our topsoil, our air in the next ten years determines whether our children will have any world to inherit. From such fin-de-siècle concerns for generational continuity is drawn the power of the Green Movement in Europe and the recent appeal of environmentalist platforms to politicians in the United States and Canada. Granted the quiet exit of the cold war, we may no longer have constant nightmares of global nuclear exchange, but we cannot shake fin-de-siècle presentiments of sudden, total, and global change, for the worst or for the best.

The tensions and energies aroused by a century's and a millennium's end—like those near the end of a life—can be either astringent or expansive. The fact that certain constellations of experience recur at centuries' ends need not entail a deadly fatalism. Endowed with mythic force, these tend to be superb times for action and invention. Indeed, we inherit from the end of the first millennium A.D. a tradition of political innovation and peace movements. Knights, their ladies, monks, bishops, and common folk met in throngs in southern France during the 990s to assert the Peace of God. And since 1300, as Jubilees have promised sabbaths of spiritual peace, pilgrims and prophets have at centuries' ends drawn their powers from fin-de-siècle presentiments of global change, of death and rebirth. Certainly we too can work toward an end that is a beginning. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Star Treks

What is **Days of Thunder** (Paramount) about? Seemingly, stock-car racing. Basically, Tom Cruise. The auto-racing picture has long been one of the rites of passage for male stars, and this is Cruise's homage to the genre. He not only tips his hat, or crash helmet, to tradition, as did James Cagney and Paul Newman among many others, he balances his career. His last film was the unorthodox *Born on the Fourth of July*; his new one couldn't be more mainstream. Smart management.

Does this mean that Cruise was cynical in making his Vietnam picture? Insofar as cynicism and sincerity are operative words in star career choices, it proves just the opposite. Cruise (and advisers) made *Fourth of July* because they thought it had an audience. That's the same reason that he made *Days of Thunder*. Since the same seismograph was consulted for readings in both cases, the validity of one choice supports the validity of the other. In any case, Cruise is being well-handled for the long haul—at the top. This sort of grooming and planning is something of a rarity in these non-studio days.

Miraculously, *Days of Thunder* is not boring. Most auto-racing pictures—Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix*, Lelouch's *A Man and a Woman* and its sequel, Hathaway's *The Racers*, innumerable others—are exercises in how to do the same five or six shots over and over again without putting the audience to sleep. That repetitiveness never really presses here because almost every time we get still another shot of cars zooming around a turn or maneuvering to pass or skinning along the retainer wall, it's part of a plot situation slightly different from the time when we last saw a similar shot.

Some of the improvement over previous racing pictures is because the driver and his "coach" in the pit can now converse on a two-way radio, which allows for the continuity of human presence while the race is on. Some of it comes from the careful way that this film was built from the start, with full knowledge of the risks of repetition, how much of it to use (for familiarity), how much of it to avoid (for novelty). The producers, Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, and the director, Tony Scott, are the men who did Cruise's big hit, *Top Gun*. That was another standard genre picture that refused to break the mold: it simply used the mold better than usual. Likewise here.

The producers employed one of the brightest of script-contrivers, Robert Towne, a writer so adroit that even his lesser screenplays (*Shampoo, Personal Best*) have some of the sheen of his better ones (*Chinatown, The Last Detail*). Cruise gets credit for collaborating on the original story, but it's Towne's screenplay, and he has made it well, with some lively dialogue and with knowledge of the genre as such. For instance, Cruise's character is taken as given: there's almost no explanation of where he came from or how he got into racing or how he got the social polish that, to some degree, he shows. Fine. Cruise's character is standard and is meant to be: he races cars well, and he's attractive to women. Nothing more is required of him as kingpin in this structure.

One novelty is that Cruise's archrival, played by Michael Rooker, is made a shade more complex than usual and ends up as Cruise's friend. (When both have been hospitalized after a crash, they have an amusing wheelchair race down a hospital corridor.) But most of the characters are Old Dependables. Chief among them is the old mechanic and car designer and pit coach, Robert Duvall, who has retired from racing but is brought back by the talent of the newcomer Cruise. Towne laid on the Southern folksiness and male humor in the role because Duvall can really run with this sort of thing. He does it all so well, making the trite character come to life, that it almost works against him: we wish he were spending his talent on more consequential roles.

Scott directs very cleanly and sharply, seeming to carve out each shot with the strokes of a samurai swordsman. The cinematographer, Ward Russell, makes his feature debut here after working in various jobs on many films, including gaffer on *Top Gun*. Russell gives Scott the color-keyed shots—many a shot is bathed in a predominant color—and the large soft-edged silhouettes that this director likes. The editors, Billy Weber and Chris Lebenzon, are also veterans of *Top Gun* and are wizards at keeping the film crackling along without seeming choppy and fussed-over. The composer, Hans Zimmer, lays in a nice ostinato in the racing scenes, a featureless long line of sound that supports without distract-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Longtime Companion. *A group of New York gay friends lose some of their number as AIDS arrives in 1981 and ravages through 1989. Craig Lucas's screenplay is compassionate yet somehow bright. (Reviewed 5/28/90)* **Q&A.** *Excellent acting and a probing view of the seamier New York in this lumpily written (Sidney Lumet) but well-directed (Sidney Lumet) drama of drugs and corruption in high places (5/21/90)* **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** *Warmth isn't what one would expect from Pedro Almodóvar, but he supplies it in this wild romance of a porno star and her kidnapper. Madrid at its maddest. (5/14/90)* **Without *You* I'm Nothing.** *Disturbing, amusing, perceptive are only three of the terms that Sandra Bernhard and her director John Boskovich deserve for this film of her one-woman show. (7/2/90)* **—SK**

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ing and that has under it a strong beat to keep the pulse pounding.

The whole film is a contrivance to promote Cruise, and he makes it all pay off. Towne and Scott give him a good entrance on a motorcycle, and from then on it's powerhouse all the way. His voice is his weakest attribute, and will probably remain so because he's having all kinds of success despite it. Barring this limitation he is all he need be, forceful, humorous, beakily good-looking—a quick, resourceful, energetic actor. His banter with Duvall, his love scenes with the obligatory female (played by a mildly impressive Australian newcomer, Nicole Kidman), his depressions and exultations and candors ("I'm more afraid of being nothing than of being killed") are all handled with the easy command of someone born to be center screen. I hope he'll do at least an occasional heterodox film like his last one, but in any case it's pleasant to have him around.

A counterexample—a promising career being bungled. Emily Lloyd's new film **Chicago Joe and the Showgirl** (New Line) is a disaster. So far, Lloyd, who is English, has appeared in three films: *Wish You Were Here*, in which she took us all with her sassy innocence and guarded tenderness; then two American films, *Cookie*, in which she did a revue cartoon of a gangster's moll, and *In Country*, where she went straight to the heart of Bobbie Ann Mason's heroine. That was one strikeout in three tries. Now her average sinks to .500 as she returns to England to appear in this arty catastrophe based on a true story of World War II.

An American deserter in London, Kiefer Sutherland, falls into the hands of a manipulative cockney stripper, Lloyd, who seduces him into making good on his brags about a criminal career. It ends with murder, and he is hanged—the only American soldier hanged in Britain for a wartime crime. She serves a five-year prison sentence.

The grisly facts may have attracted Lloyd, but the dialogue by David Yallop is so crudely pretentious that she ought to have been forewarned. She certainly should have been put off after the first day's work with their director, Bernard Rose. His trouble is not cheapness but megalomania: he gives us a series of waxworks intimate scenes and surreal mob scenes in the apparent belief that credibility is beneath such an elevated poet of the cinema as himself.

Sutherland seems anesthetized (lucky man). Lloyd, on the other hand, uses her talent throughout in attempts to bring her character to life. Which only underscores the futility of the effort and the error of her decision to appear in this bloated blight. Lloyd needs advice. •

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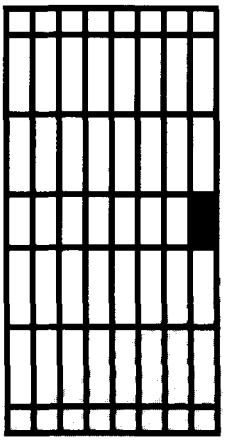

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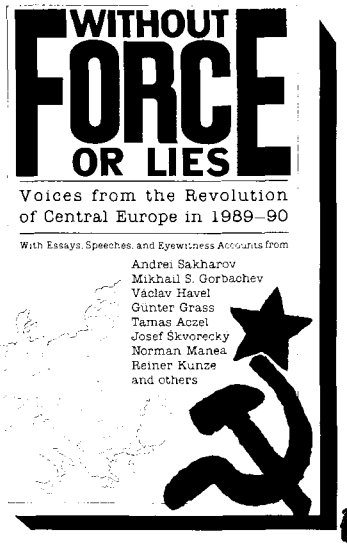

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Mark Stevens on Art

The Seducer of Certainty

For more than thirty years, the art of Jasper Johns has been scrutinized. And scrutinized. And scrutinized. There is usually a museum show somewhere; books regularly appear; the pictures make auction news. What explains such obsessive attention? Why should Johns, not a particularly easy painter, always stand front and center? It seems very odd. Even if one considers him a great artist, and many still do not, history has often treated great artists with indifference or doled out attention inconsistently.

There is his painterly touch, a poetic fluency with brush and pen that pleases the eye even when the imagery bewilders the mind. (Many people will happily regard difficulty as profundity.) Besides, in the genealogies of art history he is obviously important, as one who helped American art evolve from abstract expressionism, and his elaborate and elusive iconography makes him irresistible to minds that enjoy mapping out intricacies of meaning. And there are always those excited by the big bucks.

But something else, something harder to pinpoint, better explains the ceaseless attention. Johns has given unforgettable form to a certain shiver of doubt, at once sensual and disturbing, that serves as an important counterpoint to the bald assertion of power and optimism in postwar American culture. He is a painter much admired by intellectuals, for he is a seducer of certainty, an artist who is attracted to questions the way others are to answers. The subject of his most famous and important interrogation, of course, is the American flag.

Over time the flag has become a kind of synecdoche for Johns's oeuvre, even, perhaps, for American art in general. The well-selected and beautifully installed retrospective of his drawings now at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., opens with a drawing of the flag. The cover of the catalog shows a flag; so does the poster for the Museum of Modern Art's recent retrospective of Johns's prints. When Johns painted the first of his many versions of the flag in 1954, he was making a picture that, with the example of Marcel Duchamp's readymades in mind, challenged the spontaneous "action" painting of abstract expressionism with a cooler, more calculated approach to art.

But Johns also came of age in the 1950s, the celebrated "American moment" of worldwide power and newfound prominence in culture. And what he did to the flag—Johns's flag amendment, you might say—seemed to touch on the wider issue of American identity. He was not engaging in the easier forms of dadaesque iconoclasm; he did not make a trompe l'oeil copy or paste an actual flag onto the canvas. In his hands the "given" of the flag suddenly became nuanced, ambivalent. Depending on the version, one might see glimmerings of newsprint, a luminous light, a tactile brushiness, through the canonical patriotic geometry.

It is a part of the mystique of a national flag that it remains the same. Johns's flags were always different, though they seemed to remember that they were once the same. It has been characteristic of Johns to transform an image taken from mass culture into an idiosyncratic and private work (which makes him very different from most Pop artists). This can be an interesting and even moving thing to do, a way of conferring affect upon the mechanically produced. But to the American flag? What an appropriation. The American flag as a personal trademark: the alchemy is startling, to say nothing of the hubris.

By transforming the national symbol into an individual, changing, evanescent image, Johns became the emblematic artist of his period. His flags are truly paradoxical, seeming to contain both the image and the after-image of American power. In looking at them one must hold in mind both traditional certainties and veils of ambiguity. As a result, Johns's flags perfectly represent the shadowy position of many artists and intellectuals in the American century and the years of late modernism, when the avant-garde became fashionable, artists began to feel important, and many critics celebrated American art while attacking American power and confidence.

An artist can't plan something like that. Johns has said that the image of the flag originally came to him in a dream (what else was going on in that dream?), which sounds rather like those visions given to mystics in a cave. He certainly holds his high place in American culture because of the flag imagery, although art critics frequently write as if his eminence stems only from his powers as an artist. Unfortunately, the flag has also raised the stakes so high—questions of money, reputation, import have become so inflated—that Johns's work often seems clouded by too much reverence *and* too much attack.

I think the most difficult and intelligent response to Johns's art is to relax and allow the mind's eye to wander. A learned approach shouldn't be disparaged, of course, but it is the playfulness of Johns that often needs to be regained amid all the saluting and the earnest interpretation. In this respect, he resembles the later Joyce. One can make a career of explaining Joyce—one can also cow the susceptible with elaborate exegesis—but the art of reading Joyce, like that of looking at Johns, does not consist in making a detailed list of explanations. It lies in the play of meaning. Johns's playfulness is of a very particular kind, to be sure; it is never merely fun. He has teased away the certainty not only of the flag, but of everything he touches. If the flag was one of the "things the mind already knows," to quote his famous remark about his choice of imagery, it immediately became something the mind must still discover. And discover again. This has been true in all the phases of his work. The game is epistemological, and the playing never stops. It seems both a pleasure and a life sentence.

Johns's shimmering crosshatch pictures, for example, are amazingly intricate conceptions, full of clues and allusions that seem to fold back in upon themselves. His four paintings of the seasons, an autobiographical work that includes a rendering of the artist's shadow, contains many juxtaposed images taken from both past and present. Johns shuffles, fragments, complicates, turns an image this way and that to see if it casts new light. An idea rarely rests in the frame: boundaries invite crossing. If a single image can contain contrary meanings, all the better. Johns likes visual puns and often employs them in his work—as in his use of a little party trick of an image, called "My Wife and My Mother-in-law," that can be read as both a beautiful girl and an old crone.

Nan Rosenthal, who organized the exhibit and wrote most of the perceptive catalog, notes that Johns's drawings usually come *after* his paintings. In other words, they have not served the traditional role of a painter's drawings, to prepare, or to get right, a "finished" work still to come. On the contrary, they

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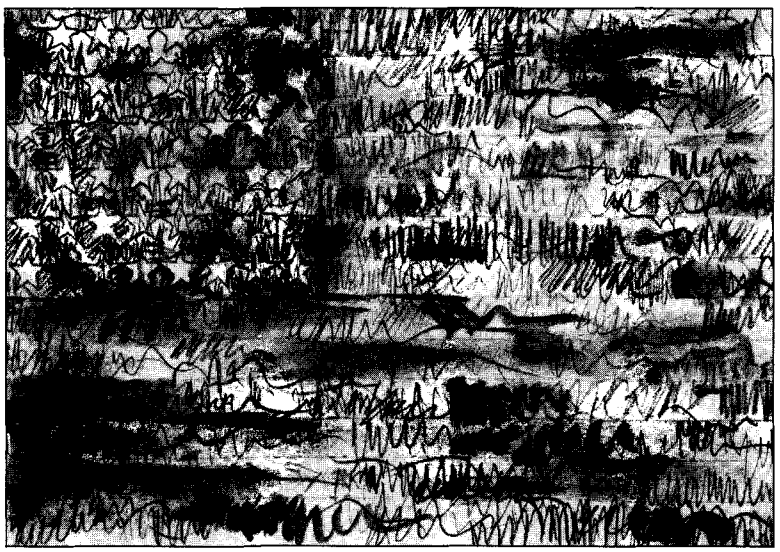
unsettle the paintings; they are afterthoughts, additions, revisions, a way of refusing closure. Once Johns has painted a picture it, too, becomes a thing "the mind already knows," and fair game for his exercises of doubt. His paintings are frequently reconsidered in other ways and other media. One cannot say something about Johns, therefore, without also saying something else.

Most of Johns's recurring imagery—flags, targets, maps, crosshatch forms, borrowings from earlier artists, work from his seasons series—is on display in Washington. The catalog clearly explains the import and the evolution of the iconography and technique; that, for example, the older Johns less often selects immediately recognizable images from mass culture and that he uses color in a more varied way. But the impression left by the show is one less of evolution than of never letting go, of an anxious continuity of interest, of an artist coiling back even as he moves ahead.

The iconographic variations are paralleled by the constant experiments with craft and medium. The show displays an extraordinary array of techniques—among others, pencil, charcoal, silverpoint, crayon, oil on paper and ink on plastic. (These last, most of them executed during the past decade, are gorgeous, light-filled works.) The craft is enjoyed for its own sake, but it is not merely an attempt at virtuosity. By observing old images through many different lenses, Johns helps create a sense of a world that, despite certain landmarks, is constantly in flux, a matter always of the shifting moment or the character of the means at hand.

At times Johns's playfulness seems mannered and self-conscious, yet he is not a trivial or an effete artist. The playfulness derives not from cleverness or conceit, but from deep divisions in a passionate sensibility. Perhaps the artist keeps playing, keeps rearranging his fragments, because that is the only way to express things that cannot be reconciled. One could not say, for example, that Johns is either a warm artist or a cold artist. He is both at once. On the warm side is the expressionist moodiness that often erupts onto his surfaces, and the sensual character of his brush stroke, which is reminiscent of Guston's. (John Cage once said of his friend's work that "looking closely helps, though the paint is applied so sensually that there is the danger of falling in love.") The opening rooms of the exhibition are rich in beautifully worked, melancholy blacks, and Johns's later art makes admiring (and somewhat opaque) reference to the art of Munch, Grünewald, and the wilder Picasso.

Certainly the most powerful image is a large picture called *Diver*, from 1963. Rosenthal describes this monumental drawing, which may make reference to Hart Crane's manner of suicide (leaping off the stern of a ship), as "the diagram of a diver in various stages of a swan dive." At the drawing's upper edge are footprints, placed on a long rectangular form that evokes a diving board. Two sets of handprints on either end of two panels suggest the diver's arms. A circular sweep of line comes from the handprints at the bottom of the picture, reminiscent of a diver flaring out his arms in preparation for the dive. "Deep blacks and muted grays blend to suggest the depths of a nocturnal sea," says Rosenthal, "while the white pastel passages in the lower center call to mind a diver's splash."



JASPER JOHNS, *FLAG*, 1958

The inky imprints of hand and foot have a ghostly immediacy, like the signature of a dead man. The spaces seem poised on the edge of balance; the picture as a whole suggests that moment in a dive when one has just committed, and there is no going back to balance or solidity. The world seems about to upend, to spiral into oblivion. It is an expressionist picture, in other words, and yet not quite, not altogether. The implied circle of the arms also recalls other, cooler considerations: a compass; a clock; or the studied analysis of form in Leonardo's famous drawing "Human Figure in a Circle, Illustrating Proportions (Vitruvian Man)," which in itself recalls a crucifixion.

Diver is Johns at his warmest, that is, most willing to let tragedy show itself without the interference of learning or wit. On the colder side of Johns is the catlike detachment and the sporting intellect, most obvious in the irony and the obscure references of the imagery. But the chill can also be sensed in the planned, boxed-in character of many of his pictures. Johns loves the workings of chance; but like Cage, he generally provides a strict structure in which chance is allowed to operate. He is not really loose. In a later version of an image, he may carefully copy a fortuitous drip or a squiggle that was originally happenstance. He possesses play, he co-opts chance. That spontaneous little squiggle is reincarnated as an idea.

Such oppositions enable Johns to convey a certain kind of pathos particularly well. Because he is such a tactile painter, the inability to finally possess, to hold, often becomes genuinely moving. His numbers and letters are not merely abstract symbols, for example; they convey an almost living presence, as if they were real and touchable. They aspire to the physical in the way that some objects in early still-life painting—say, a Zurbarán lemon—seem to aspire to the metaphysical. In a world that grows increasingly abstract, Johns understands better than most the melancholy aura of representations.

The oppositions in Johns have also enabled him to become one of those artists able to fashion a synthesis, if not a reconciliation, among competing traditions. In the catalog Rosenthal observes about one particular picture that it combines references to both Picasso and Duchamp. In fact, Johns's entire oeuvre sometimes seems like an effort to find a way to get both spirits into the same frame, to arrive at an art that respects the ironic intelligence of a dandy and the immediate physical apprehension of feeling that is characteristic of abstract expressionism, to fashion an art of painting that a man like Duchamp would not consider embarrassingly old-fashioned or bourgeois.

The way that Johns plays with the principal strains of modernism, his passion for elaboration and contradiction, his general air of learned knowingness and interest in making fine points, are characteristic of an artist working late in a tradition. He is the kind of intelligent artist whose calling is to find a way to

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keep alive qualities (whether of Duchamp or Picasso) that once seemed rougher and more robust. In this respect, his emblematic position in American art derives not only from his mastery of the flag, but also from his expression of the predicament of his time.

Yet Johns is also a likable artist, above all for the uncertain joy he takes in flux. When Westerners fail to possess meaning, they typically feel pessimism, absence, loss. There are times when the playing in Johns becomes wearying, repetitive, like that of a jazz musician who cannot find a way back from his improvisation. But there are other times when his pictures—*Cicada*, for example—display an almost Eastern appreciation for the calculated operations of chance, for the music of metamorphosis.

For an artist obsessed with change, death is a natural theme. Johns's work may be brighter now than it was thirty years ago, more devoted to color, but the preoccupation with death continues. Death is the change that cannot be outfoxed, translated, tried again. It confounds every tradition. Not surprisingly, Johns's playfulness takes place in its shadow. He flirts with death by constantly reopening his art, by never ending his story. He stays alive by hanging the question, like Scheherazade. •

Why does China eat its own?

A Culture of Cruelty

BY ANDREW J. NATHAN

No better proof could be imagined for Nietzsche's insight that cruelty is the great festival pleasure of mankind than the torment inflicted by the Chinese people on one another for the last 400 years. Jonathan Spence's history of that period is filled with burying alive, burning alive, slicing, strangulation, stabbing, drowning, poison gas inserted into tunnels, coerced suicide, exposure of severed heads, vengeful exhumation and dismemberment of corpses, arson, rapine, torture, corruption, epidemic, famine, forced migrations, wars, riots, strikes, rebellions, and piracy. The first three pages of Liu Binyan's memoir, *A Higher Kind of Loyalty*, recount an assassination by bombing, a child killed in a car accident, a murder, an execution, the death of a young brother from scarlet fever, and a daily parade of carts filled with beggars' corpses. Bette Bao Lord's snapshots from the lives of Chinese friends include beatings by Red Guards, a wife denouncing a husband, a nursing infant denied breast milk, an ear torn off, a thumb broken, and a head whacked in half by the stroke of a scythe.

"Why does a culture that condemns violence," asks Stevan Harrell, "that plays down the glory of military exploits, awards its highest prestige to literary, rather than martial figures, and seeks harmony over all other values, in fact display such frequency and variety of violent behavior?"

It would be difficult but unnecessary to prove that China's history is sadder than that of other countries on a per capita basis. If nothing else, the scale of horror is unique in this largest of all nations. Nearly twenty years ago Richard L. Walker, in a study for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, estimated that the "human cost of communism in China" after 1949 ranged from 32 million to 60 million deaths. Walker's estimates were rough, but also incomplete. He did not include the 20 million to 30 million famine deaths in 1959-61 that scholars learned about relatively recently, nor could he touch on the revival of female infanticide since the late 1970s, which has claimed what Spence estimates at 200,000 lives a year.

And such costs include only deaths. They do not include the 1 million people who Liu says were labeled "rightists" in 1957 and punished for up to twenty years (an increase over the usual estimate of 550,000); or the 20 million young people who, with another 20 million factory workers, were "sent down" to the countryside in the Mao years to get them out of the cities; or the 20 million landlords, rich peasants, and others given discriminatory class labels in the early 1950s; or the 2.9 million cadres who Deng Xiaoping said were mistreated in the Cultural Revolution, or the 100 million persons who Hu Yaobang estimated were affected in one way or another by that cataclysm.

No one has been able to estimate the population of the Chinese gulag, although Senator Jesse Helms reportedly intends to hold hearings to try. Superb studies by Robin Munro for Amnesty International and Asia Watch, based on reports in the Chinese press, have detailed routine torture and mistreatment of prisoners in Chinese detention centers, jails, and camps, but it is hopeless to estimate the scale of abuse when the prison population itself is unknown. Christina Gilmartin's essay in *Violence in China*, together with some anecdotes from Liu's career as an investigative reporter, scratch the surface of the vast subject of sexual abuse in Chinese jails, camps, offices, farms, factories, and families, but again the data defy attempts at quantification.

Nor have the costs paid by the Chinese been limited to the period of communism. Twenty million died during the Taiping rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century, ten million in a famine in the 1870s, half a million in a famine in the 1920s. Spence reports that about 14 million men were drafted into the Chinese military during the war against Japan; a tenth of them died of disease and malnutrition before seeing combat. One of the fine features of his book is an endless series of small maps showing troop

A Higher Kind of Loyalty
by Liu Binyan
translated by Zhu Hong
(Pantheon, 283 pp., $22.95)

"Tell the World": What Happened in China and Why
by Liu Binyan with Ruan Ming and Xu Gang
translated by Henry L. Epstein
(Pantheon, 185 pp., $18.95)

The Search for Modern China
by Jonathan S. Spence
(W. W. Norton, 876 pp., $29.95)

Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic
by Bette Bao Lord
(Knopf, 352 pp., $19.95)

Violence in China: Essays in Culture and Counterculture
edited by Jonathan N. Lipman and Stevan Harrell
(State University of New York Press, 249 pp., $39.50, $12.95 paper)

Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution
by Lynn T. White III
(Princeton University Press, 344 pp., $39.50)

ANDREW J. NATHAN is the author of *China's Crisis* and co-author of *Human Rights in Contemporary China*, both published by Columbia University Press.

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movements across the Chinese landscape from the late Ming to 1959. "Every word is blood and grief," wrote a Chinese poet in 1944.

What has been acquired in exchange for all this misery? Today the consensus of Chinese outside officialdom is: nothing. "What Confucian culture has given us over the past several thousand years is not a national spirit of enterprise, a system of laws, or a mechanism of cultural renewal, but a fearsome self-killing machine that, as it degenerated, constantly devoured its best and its brightest, its own vital elements." So wrote the authors of "River Elegy," the television serial, whose broadcast on Chinese television the year before last helped to set the scene for the outpouring of anti-regime sentiment in the spring of 1989.

The way in which Spence interprets the "search for modernity" implies that he agrees with this tragic vision. He follows recent academic practice in placing the beginning of the modern period 300 or more years further back than the old conventional benchmark of the mid-nineteenth century. But instead of stressing the secular rise over this time of agricultural productivity, handicraft industry, commercialization, population, urbanization, literacy, and social and geographic mobility, as other recent historians have done, Spence points out that people's average levels of consumption were no higher in the Qing than in the Ming, in the 1930s than in the nineteenth century, under Mao than under Chiang Kai-shek.

He would concede (though he never says so) that China has made itself modern in the sense that it produces computers and rockets, feeds a population of a billion, educates most of its people, provides medical care sufficient to establish a life expectancy of sixty-nine years, and participates in the international economy and political system. He also gives full play to the achievements of Chinese literature and art, statecraft and philosophy, and his book is beautifully illustrated with examples of these achievements. But he argues that China has not been modern in at least 400 years, in the sense of being a nation "both integrated and receptive, fairly sure of its own identity yet able to join others on equal terms in the quest for new markets, new technologies, new ideas." The quest of his title is thus one in which he believes the Chinese are still engaged, unsuccessfully.

The fact that Liu and Bette Bao Lord share Spence's despair is significant, for particular reasons in each case. To Lord, China's tragedy is personal. Herself of Chinese origin, with many friends and relatives there, she went to China believing that it would be possible to reform the Party from within, and hoping to promote "one of the most critical bilateral relationships in the world." By the end of her hardworking tour of duty as the American ambassador's wife, she had come to see the Chinese system as thoroughly brutal and corrupt. Then, staying a few extra weeks in the spring of 1989 to help CBS News cover the Gorbachev-Deng Xiaoping summit, she saw the ruins of Deng's reforms come crashing down around her friends. A close cousin who stayed in China when Lord emigrated with her parents in 1946 symbolizes Lord's sense of having escaped her fair share of misery by leaving. Having enjoyed more than her share of luck, she feels that she has abandoned her relatives to one of the hardest fates in this world, the fate of being Chinese.

Liu's memoir marks the nearly complete disillusionment of one of China's last hopeful men. Liu made his name as an investigative reporter exposing power abuse and corruption in the decade after his rehabilitation in 1979 from the stigma of being a "rightist." As a rightist, he lost his Party membership and his job, and spent two long periods of forced labor in the countryside. After his rehabilitation, his first—and still his most famous—article was "People or Monsters?" (It is available in English in a book with the same title edited by Perry Link, published by Indiana University Press in 1983.) It argued that a major corruption case in a commune in northeastern China occurred because cliquism and mutual back-scratching had eroded the vigilance of the local Party committee.

Liu's trademark answer to the problem, proposed in an essay in 1985, was "A Second Kind of Loyalty." The first kind of loyalty was what had gotten China into trouble, he said. It was the loyalty of those who are "diligent and conscientious, putting up with hardship and swallowing their resentment, doing exactly what they are told, never expressing a contradictory opinion." This loyalty, into whose moribund cults the Li Peng regime is trying to puff a spark of life today, allowed bad people to seize power and do their will.

The second kind of loyalty, however, would save China. Liu personified it in two protagonists, Ni Yuxian and Chen Shizhong, who stood up for the true ideals of socialism for twenty years, when those ideals were being trampled by Mao and his acolytes. They wrote letters to oppose the Great Leap and the split with the Soviet Union, hung wall posters to oppose the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, and gave speeches to defend good cadres who were attacked by Red Guards. But they never engaged in intrigue or violence or tried to evade their inevitable punishments, and each of them spent years in jail. They played the classic Chinese role of remonstrators, who sacrifice their flesh and blood in order to awaken the ruler to his duty. (Ironically, each subsequently diverged from Liu's model, but in opposite ways. Ni obtained political asylum in New York and helped found an exile party dedicated to overthrowing the Chinese Communist Party. Chen went around China, at least before June 4 last year, giving speeches on the topic, "I Offer the Love in My Heart to the Party and the People.")

Liu identified with Ni and Chen. His memoir was also going to be called "A Second Kind of Loyalty," but the title was apparently revised to make more sense to Americans. Liu portrays himself as telling the truth despite repression because he believed that his appeals could awaken healthy forces in the Party. He was never a dissident. As a reporter for the central Party paper, he was able to conduct his investigations cloaked in the authority of the Party, publish his works under the protection of the sympathetic General Secretary Hu Yaobang, and make some of his reports not in writing to the public but orally to the relevant provincial Party secretaries. Even after his expulsion from the Party in 1987 for bourgeois liberalism after the fall of his protector Hu, he saw himself as a sort of political Boddhisatva who postponed his relief from suffering to help others reach salvation.

Although he doesn't use such terms, Liu inhabits a Confucian world divided between moral persons (*junzi*) and people who are only human (*xiaoren*). For him, the human problem is not to figure out what is the right thing to do, but to make up one's mind to do it. A warm, compassionate, approachable man, he has an endless appetite and memory for the details of individual lives, and a deep understanding of human motives. But in the end he discerns, in the complexity of the human comedy, only two kinds of people—those whose self-justifications are excuses for selfishness, and those who sacrifice for justice.

Liu thus embodies what the historian Thomas A. Metzger has called the "transformative" (as opposed to the "accommodative") impulse in Chinese culture. Like Confucius, Liu sees human nature as basically good and believes in changing the world through the force of example. To borrow the title of another

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of his essays, corruption in China occurs because "good people" are "weak." The events of last year have brought him to the point of predicting the fall of the Li Peng-Deng Xiaoping regime, which he sees as representing a small privileged stratum of conservative bureaucrats rather than the Chinese Communist Party as a whole. Although in *"Tell the World"* he suggests that a non-Communist democracy will emerge after an interregnum of rule by Party reformists, in *A Higher Kind of Loyalty* he appears still to hope that the Chinese Communist Party will rediscover its soul and return to the path of its original ideals. However ambivalently, Liu's second kind of loyalty is still loyalty.

Younger Chinese have criticized him for this all along. When he toured American campuses in 1988, a student at Columbia confronted him with the example of Fang Lizhi (the astrophysicist and human rights activist recently expelled from the CCP and now in England after a year in refuge in the American Embassy in Beijing), who had declared himself opposed to communism. "Fang's stand is based on the Western scientific viewpoint," she contended, "while yours is a kind of peasant-based pro-Communist idealism which can never solve China's fundamental problems." Many in the audience applauded. About a year later the young critic Liu Xiaobo attacked Liu for believing that "someday the master [the CCP] will wake up and appreciate his absolute sincerity because his criticisms are not intended to hurt the master, but to make him more perfect." (Liu Xiaobo is in jail now, accused of being a "sinister black hand" behind the Tiananmen demonstrations.)

Liu has moved toward the harshest view of Chinese reality compatible with a shred of faith in the goodness of man. He is a Chinese Rip Van Winkle, who returned from twenty years of feeding pigs and hauling night soil to discover a world in which evil was pervasive and the few good people were viciously oppressed. In one place that he investigated, "the so-called planned economy was . . . nothing but the continuous flow of public resources into the private pockets of the power holders." In another, "the Party secretary could pick and choose any girl from destitute families to sleep with him in return for food subsidies." In a third, a petitioner for justice was repeatedly jailed and tortured: "The children became vagrants, often beaten up, with no chance to go to school; the family's ration of wheat and kindling wood was held back; their house was destroyed." A fourth location was "a kingdom of evil, . . . a cursed land where all values had been reversed." Throughout China, malefactors who had been in power since the Cultural Revolution cooperated to protect one another, and the reformists at the center, beset by forces only murkily hinted at by Liu, were too weak to penetrate the web of evil. In all, says Liu, "China seemed like a monstrous mill, continually rolling, crushing all individuality out of the Chinese character."

A somewhat formulaic optimism informs the coda to *A Higher Kind of Loyalty*. "The Chinese people have now changed," he asserts. "The people will pay a bloody price, but in the end they will shake off this monstrous thing [the ruling clique] that is draining them of their life's blood." (The language is typical of both of Liu's books, which are more like political documents than personal reflections, and which have been translated almost too faithfully from the Chinese.) Lord, too, ends with an obligatory upbeat ending, a parable of a coverlet kept immaculate through years of prison. Spence's attempt to solace his readers leads to a last sentence that is the only really ill-considered one in his book: "There would be no truly modern China until the people were given back their voices." His own narrative shows that the Chinese people never had their voices.

Like Chernobyl, China seems to get worse the more we learn about it. Of course, we need to beware of the phenomenon—Spence traces it well—by which the Western image of China oscillates between exaggerated hopes and exaggerated fears. If it was wrong to see Mao's China as a people's Shangri-La, it is also wrong to imagine that in Li Peng's China most of the people spend most of their time doing anything other than going about their daily business. Lord states that "all Chinese [are] in pain," and I believe she is right, but what does a people in pain look like? The kind of pain she is talking about does not show on people's faces as they bicycle to work, any more than it did when travelers reported that all was well in Mao's day. The truth about such a large country is hard to discern. Still, the combined testimony of observers with such cumulative and diverse authority is impressive.

Why are things so bad? "To understand China today," observes Spence, "we need to know about China in the past." But what does the past tell us? Spence devotes an informative section to Hegel's theory that China is doomed by geography to be an inward-looking peasant nation excluded from the mainstream of history, a theory widely accepted by Chinese today. But he does

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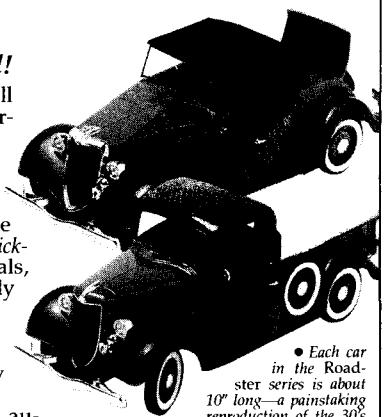

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not seem to endorse such grand generalizations. The pointers he gives involve more discrete historical echoes, parallels, and precedents. The book points out that problems such as bureaucracy, regionalism, peasant poverty, abuse of women, familism, and the struggle for political power persisted or recurred, but does not try to explain why. Spence is a brilliant storyteller, endlessly curious about how things really were at the top and the bottom of society, on the plains and in the borderlands, at weddings and wars, in the rice fields and the scholar's studio. While the vast tapestry contains many patterns, however, he is chary of stating what they are. If there are "cycles" of some sort at work, as he says several times, are they any more than historical resemblances and coincidences that are bound to occur as human folly grinds repeatedly through a finite number of permutations?

Spence tends to explain violence as occurring mostly when "the Chinese people ... threw themselves against the power of the state." This is a comforting vision. Yet his narrative contains plenty of instances of the violence of the oppressed against one another. As one of his own witnesses says, "The poor squeeze each other to death." There is also a trace of romanticism in the sections on the Communist revolution and Mao's rule. Spence portrays Mao leading the country confidently in pursuit of his vision, however flawed. He doesn't convey the constant bumbling, desperate insecurity, vicious infighting, and hysterical improvisation that the Chinese Communists disguised behind the bluster of their theory of scientific socialism.

Lord's answer to the violence of Chinese life is national character. "Chinese go through life wearing masks," she says. The masks take over the wearer, robbing him of his identity and inducing paranoia toward others. Able to adapt to any circumstance, the Chinese "never bother asking themselves who they are. They wait to be told." Under Mao, the Chinese were programmed to violence. They took their turns as victims and perpetrators in a cycle that left no one blameless and no one responsible. As one of her informants tells her, "It's over now. It was not my fault. It was not his fault. Everyone suffered. It was the times. We were all casualties of history."

Lord is a sensitive observer of human attitudes. One of the most delightful sections of the book is a series of vignettes in which Chinese recount their puzzling encounters in American society. But her well-meaning account of Chinese culture boils down to an East Asian example of the "orientalism" criticized years ago by Edward W. Said. It makes the Chinese seem less our *semblables* and *frères* than mysterious others, sinister and cruel. It offers a national stereotype instead of analyzing the situations that can make people behave savagely. It labels the symptoms of living in Chinese society as characteristics that explain Chinese behavior.

It is ironic that Lord's approach replaces understanding with exoticism, because she writes out of affection, positioning herself as a member of both cultures, interpreter of each to the other. Yet the Chinese side of her credentials is open to question. She came to the United States at the age of eight and did not visit again until 1973. Returning as the wife of the American ambassador, she let her interest in learning about Chinese lives be known. Many Chinese obliged, in person or on tape. She herself suspects that their motives were not always disinterested, although in fact she was unable to do them favors with the American government. In any case, she received scores of anecdotes, some rather stylized, all filtered to us through a pathos-filled language that replaces her interviewees' voices with her own. The result is a book that tells the reader some of what went on in Mao's China but little about why.

Liu Binyan's notion of a "double network" of political and economic relations created by the Cultural Revolution comes closer to illuminating the structure of Chinese society. He sees the Cultural Revolution as a turmoil in which opportunistic politicians scrambled to power. Once there, they stayed through all the twists and turns of the line. As "veterans of three dynasties," they had an overweening interest in keeping down all those whom they had oppressed on their way up. "To a Party leader, it is a matter of life and death always to be right." The protective network extended from the counties at the bottom of China's administrative hierarchy to the top. At each level politicians protected those below so that they could in turn be protected. The CCP turned into a giant Mafia.

One of the saddest cases of oppression that Liu describes is that of a worker named Wang Fumian, whom Liu was finally unable to help because he was expelled from the Party before his report on the case could be acted upon. In the course of investigating Wang's case, Liu discovered that Wang had been confined to a mental hospital on a diagnosis of "mania." According to the diagnostic handbook locally in use, mania was characterized by

> overconfidence, extreme willfulness, found mostly in people of advanced cultural background. They are biased and tend to distort facts, although their delusions are not wholly divorced from reality. Taken for normal at an early age, the patient gradually asserts his (her) willpower more and more forcibly, he (she) rushes about offering petitions, writing endless letters of accusation. A few are deluded into thinking they are making exceptional contributions to humanity.

It was a perfect description of Liu himself. The only mystery is how, under such circumstances, a few independent individuals like Liu and the stubborn petitioners he wrote about could continue to exist.

On the whole, Liu's analysis is convincing, except that he is unclear about many of the details. He seems to be protecting some people himself, as he refers from time to time to higher-ups who were spiking his work from behind the scenes but does not tell us who they were. (Or did he wish to spare American readers a surfeit of names filled with Xs and Zs engaged in intricate political struggles?) And Liu's tendency to judge persons rather than the system diverts attention from the question of how such things could happen. Is it because evil people are stronger than good people, as he suggests? Or does it have something to do with the design of Chinese institutions?

As Norbert Elias has written, describing the descent into savagery of German troops in the Baltics in the late days of World War I:

> [The] path toward barbarity and dehumanization ... always takes considerable time to unfold in relatively civilized societies. Terror and horror hardly appear in such societies without a long process of social disintegration. All too often the act of naked violence ... is analyzed with the help of short-term, static explanations. That may be meaningful if one is not seeking explanations but only attempting to establish culpability. It is easy to see barbarism and de-civilizations as the expression of a free personal decision, but that kind of voluntarist explanation is shallow and unhelpful.

In their approach to the problem of violence, Lipman and Harrell and their contributors move in the direction that Elias recommends by looking at the failure of the norms that are supposed to prohibit violence. The best chapter is Anne F. Thurston's account of urban violence during the Cultural Revolution (drawing from her longer study, *Enemies of the People*, which appeared in 1987). She directs attention to the processes that strip away inhibitions to violence by dehumanizing the target. In Mao's Chi-

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na, such processes included the labeling of class enemies, glorification of the necessity of revolutionary violence, public struggle sessions that inured people to the sight of suffering, and peer pressure based on the practice of victimizing all who refused to victimize others.

The most penetrating exposition of this constellation of institutions is Lynn T. White III's, whose arguments are summarized in a paragraph by Spence. White stresses the role of three interlocking institutions, each found in fully developed form nowhere but in Mao's China: the work unit, the system of class labels, and the political campaign. The work unit locked each individual in place for life with a set of co-workers like scorpions in a jar; the class label system created what were thought to be permanent castes (they have since disappeared) with contrary interests, and with members of the despised castes seen as subhuman; political campaigns trained people to be vicious. White traces the creation of these institutions in Shanghai in the 1950s and 1960s and then their impact on the course of Shanghai's Cultural Revolution.

How the personalities of young Chinese were shaped by class labels, units, and campaigns has been brilliantly described by Anita Chan in *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation*, which appeared in 1985. Chan showed that a combination of indoctrination, competition for approval, and fear of victimization forged decent young people into Manichaean bigots. Liu provides powerful testimony about how it felt to be one of the victims in this system, isolated, assaulted, and humiliated until even a person with his powerful sense of individuality felt guilty for crimes he had not committed.

Doleful as such explanations are, at least they remove the Chinese from the ghetto of the inscrutable and show how normal human beings can be reduced to marauders. Authors like Thurston, White, and Chan are able to return China to the mainstream of history from which Hegel excluded it, even though the history that China rejoins (so far) is that of Stalinism and fascism rather than the Hegelian progress to freedom. The institutions that created violence in the period of the Cultural Revolution were creations of Mao's China. They cannot explain the upheavals of the preceding hundreds of years. (In fact, no one has yet explained how and why Mao's people invented these institutions.) But studies like these point the way to deciphering the mystery of extreme violence through the analysis of social settings that rob people of human connections to their victims.

If these are the lessons from China's modern history, they are not very encouraging. One wonders whether even the mordant Lu Xun was too upbeat when he said, as quoted by Spence, "The history of mankind's battle forward through bloodshed is like the formation of coal, where a great deal of wood is needed to produce a small amount of coal." Much human wood lies under the ground of Chinese history, but how much coal? •

The Hidden Role of Race

BY THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL

The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath by Kevin Phillips

(Random House, 262 pp., $19.95)

The Politics of Rich and Poor represents a remarkable political and intellectual journey. Twenty-two years ago, Kevin Phillips laid out the basic strategy to persuade white working-class voters in the North and South to join a conservative Republican coalition, establishing the groundwork for GOP operatives such as Roger Ailes, Ed Rollins, Lee Atwater, and for a succession of victorious Republican presidential candidates. Now Phillips has decamped from conservatism. He has produced an exhaustive denunciation of Republican excess. His book is a tract that exposes massive profiteering by a tiny elite at the expense of the legitimate productivity and growth of the overwhelming majority, to the long-range detriment of the nation.

If it were not for Phillips's own past, this book might be regarded as merely one more study marshaling a solid accumulation of data to prove that the 1980s saw a substantial upward redistribution of wealth and income, while the nation's international economic stature weakened. What makes this book unique is less the content than the author: the man who helped devise the core Republican strategy that placed the White House in Republican hands in five of the past six elections is now predicting, in fact is calling for, a populist and progressive uprising against the top-heavy, top-down coalition that his own tactics helped to put in place.

Liberals have already greeted this book as a tonic, celebrating the fact that one of the sharpest minds in politics has entered their ranks. Phillips unexpectedly joins a school of Democratic and liberal economic critics, including Robert Kuttner, William Greider, Lester Thurow, Walter Dean Burnham, and Robert Reich, each of whom Phillips draws upon and quotes favorably. The Reagan presidency, Phillips maintains, represents that stage of the political cycle in which administrations "lose touch with the public, excessively empower their own elites, and become a target for a new round of populist outsidership and reform. . . . Reagan's GOP became a high-powered vehicle not only for capitalist revitalization, but also, as we have seen, for the accumulation of wealth by a relatively narrow elite." Spurning Reagan and Bush, Phillips is now drawn to such liberal Democrats as Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower and House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt.

In Phillips's analysis, the moment is ripening for the replacement of one hated elite—liberals who have imposed their cultural and racial agenda on the mass of voters—with another: the mega-rich who are profiting from the erosion of "the ability of the United States to maintain its economic position in the world" in the face of international challenge:

> Millionaire poverty consultants, Southampton seaside benefits for Mexican grape pickers, and Ford Foundation traveling grants for Democratic campaign aides were old news, the elites and perquisites of a bygone era. Now there were Southern California 'kitchen cabinet' cliques, Manhattan and Capitol Hill think tanks promoting tax cuts, Republican fund-raising dinners featuring corporate raiders like Boone Pickens and Ivan Boesky, and Calvin Coolidge birthday parties hosted by parvenu Washington lobbyists and consultants [a swipe at GOP consultant Roger Stone] happy to tell attending gossip columnists the price of their new Savile Row suits.

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By the close of the 1980s, Phillips argues, Republican ascendancy had become Republican vulnerability: "With Republican presidents in office for sixteen years out of twenty, and with four or more to come, Washington by 1989 was the seat of a new well-heeled Republican elite almost as distant from the Iowa and Idaho grass roots as their Democratic predecessors." For all its rhetorical power, however, Phillips's diagnosis of imminent danger reflects the naïveté that is characteristic of the contemporary left in American politics. His analysis assumes, first, that the maldistribution of income and wealth is adequate in itself to provoke a populist response, even in the context of generally, if slightly, rising standards of living. And it assumes, second, that money issues will supersede questions of culture, ethnicity, and race. Some of Phillips's naïveté grows out of his interpretation of statistical data. More important, however, is his failure to take into account the continuing power of race, the issue he accurately recognized as the driving force in domestic politics twenty-two years ago in his masterwork, *The Emerging Republican Majority*.

Phillips correctly describes the extraordinary shift in the distribution of money and wealth in this country over the past decade or so. But in a book that sets out to examine the *politics* of rich and poor, Phillips fails to explain adequately the lack of public protest, the resounding silence that has greeted the massive redistribution. It is a silence that demands fuller explanation, given this country's relatively strong anti-elitist tradition. And it can't help raising doubts about Phillips's confident forecast of an impending surge of resentment. Though he repeatedly cites historical cycles (a thin reed on which to hang predictive analysis), Phillips fails to describe the route to the new, bottom-up populist Eden; he offers no game plan, buttressed with precinct returns and regional voting patterns, that will lead to a revival of economic populism.

Although Phillips has collected an abundance of generally sound statistical data, he makes one central interpretation that provides dangerously false comfort to those who advocate or anticipate a populist uprising against Republican rule. In a table describing changes in family income between 1977 to 1988, Phillips shows that, for the bottom 80 percent of the income distribution, those years brought a net loss in average family income. Those in the ninth decile gained a modest 1 percent, while those in the top decile gained 16.4 percent, and the top 1 percent saw its average family income rise by a solid 49.8 percent. "Academicians and politicians might be able to play pingpong with statistics seeking to define overall family income," Phillips writes, "but there is no way to argue with the official government portrait of a shift of income between 1980 and 1988 away from the bottom 80 percent of the U.S. population toward the most affluent fifth." At the same time, skewed voting patterns gave the beneficiaries of the Reagan years inordinate power on election day: "The actual lever-pulling was disproportionately Buick-owning and Book-of-the-Month Club. . . . People in the top two quintiles together probably accounted for over 50 percent of turnout—and with a disproportionately Republican effect."

The clear implication of these assertions is that if class-skewed voting were eliminated, and if voters could be persuaded to cast ballots on the basis of changes in family income, the GOP would be in the gravest difficulty—indeed, that it would be down for the count. Unfortunately, this central claim—that "there is no way to argue with the official" findings that "between 1980 and 1988," 80 percent of families took a beating—is not accurate. Phillips's figures start, in fact, in 1977 and cover a period of severe economic erosion when Democrats were in full control of the White House and of Congress, as they were until January 20, 1981. If the period between 1980 and 1990 is used instead of the years 1977-88, a far more ambiguous picture of Republican rule emerges.

Data compiled by the Congressional Budget Office charting changes in family income from 1977 to 1990 show a huge increase in the disparity between rich and poor. But during the decade of the 1980s, a clear majority of families experienced some increase in both pretax and after-tax income. The gains for those in the middle brackets were very modest, but these Americans were not net losers; only the bottom 30 percent lost out during the 1980s—a significant number but not a majority. Those in the fourth through sixth deciles saw their after-tax income grow by barely noticeable amounts of 1.7 to 3.0 percent. The top 10 percent experienced a 40.9 percent increase in after-tax family income, and the top 1 percent received a striking 87.1 percent increase.

I belabor these statistics to make a fairly simple point: there is no guarantee that if everyone voted, and if all voters cast economically self-interested ballots, there would be the makings of a populist groundswell. Take a couple in the middle class, making the average income of a family in the fifth decile, neither of whom is committed to the Democrats or the Republicans. This family saw its after-tax income rise very modestly between 1980 and 1990, from $22,105 to $22,608, in 1990 dollars—a relatively small $503 dollar increase that pales in comparison to the $186,022 gain for the families in the top 1 percent, among whom income shot up from $213,672 in 1980 to a projected $399,697 in 1990.

At the same time, however, our swing-vote couple may have a long memory, a memory that goes back to the Carter years. In that case, they can recall their income falling from $23,593 in 1977 to $22,105 in 1980, a very painful $1,488 loss. This couple may well be angered over the growing inequities of American society, and deeply disturbed by the fact that prosperity has meant only modest gains for them, while those on the top gain mightily. Still, by any rational, self-interested standard, the couple's $503 gain from 1980 to 1990 looks a lot better than the $1,488 loss between 1977 and 1980. These voters are conflicted, not convinced.

What this suggests is that a major change in the conduct of government, a correction of what Phillips calls the "dangers posed by excessive individualism, greed, and insufficient concern for America as a community," is by no means certain to materialize. More than growing income inequity will be needed to persuade key swing voters to shift from policies that have produced—or coincided with—slight gains for the majority. Those seeking to achieve a revival of more equitable income policies face the

The Bat

She scribbles *dusk* across the sun
with the erratic haste of one
who needs to get it down, this gray
fissure between night and day.

The moth, mosquito, all that rise
from dream's dark ground and flood the skies—
her prey. Thought would be ponderous.
What she perceives and what she does

converge. Above the pine she sweeps
the air, gathering, gathering, keeps
festooning space with urgent strokes
that dissipate like breath, like smoke.

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substantial hurdle of persuading voters that their goals can be achieved without a loss of efficiency.

Important numbers of American voters are puzzled and apprehensive about what exactly it takes to create national wealth. The erosion of industrial economies throughout the world under far-left, center-left, and labor regimes has cooled some popular redistributive ardor, undermining traditional liberal economic ideologies. None of this constitutes, for a liberal-populist revival, an insurmountable hurdle. But far more comprehensive, innovative, and tough-minded thinking will be required than has yet been demonstrated by the Democratic Party, a party still struggling to break loose from the perception that it is dominated by special interests.

The strength of Phillips's *The Emerging Republican Majority*, which appeared in 1969, was its deep understanding of voting history, of American values, of coalitional alignments, of regional conflict, and of demographic trends, which Phillips used to demonstrate an inexorable conservative reaction to liberal excess. He documented not only the imposition of elitist policy by dominant factions of the Democratic Party, but also the powerful outbursts of white working- and middle-class resentment and anger toward busing and residential integration, toward liberal cultural permissiveness, and toward liberal endorsement of the rights revolution. As Nixon shifted right, moving from the establishment Republicanism of 1960 to the more culturally and racially conservative Republicanism of 1968, Phillips traced the growing strength of the GOP nominee in Irish, Italian, and French-Canadian precincts, with parallel declines in silk-stocking, WASP Scarsdale, the upscale Jewish precincts of Riverdale, and black central Harlem. Phillips recognized in 1968 that the vote for George Wallace was just a "way station" in the steady conversion of whites to the GOP. "Maintenance of Negro voting rights is essential to the GOP," he wrote in 1969. "Unless Negroes continue to displace white Democratic organizations, the latter may remain viable as spokesmen for Deep Southern conservatism."

In his new book, Phillips describes the consequences—the benefits for monied elites—of economic policies during the Reagan administration, but he simply does not have the persuasive documentation—the richly detailed voting returns, the concrete expressions of popular resentment, and the emergence of a new political demography that characterized his earlier work—to show how a revival of either progressive or populist politics might make itself felt in national elections. He is forced to acknowledge that "egalitarianism and cyclical populism" have not yet materialized. By 1989, he admits, "no more than a vague framework existed for the sort of insurgent psychologies and politics that had helped to end prior heydays."

Phillips is unable to nail down his case, I would argue, because he fails to confront an inescapable dilemma of modern bottom-up movements. It is a dilemma increasingly troubling to key numbers of voters: that in a global marketplace, the broadly protectionist, pro-labor stance traditionally embraced by center-left and populist parties can now be accused of courting danger, the danger of driving production overseas or to less expensive regions. Nor does Phillips describe how the forces of liberalism in this country will succeed in disentangling the strands of cultural conservatism that for more than twenty-five years have snarled the development of a coherent left-populist coalition. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Phillips does not address the interaction of racial and cultural conflicts that has prevented restoration of the very bottom-up coalition he seeks to revive.

One of the central purposes of this book is to set in motion some of the "insurgent psychologies and politics"—to jump-start a revival of economically based populism. Its charts and prose aspire to inflame as much as to instruct. The salaries of corporate CEOs skyrocketed while those of employees stagnated; millionaires became "economic nobodies and mega-wealth ballooned out of sight"; the partners of Cravath, Swaine & Moore pocketed $1.2 million each in 1987 alone. Phillips reveals a conspiracy of the rich that has become international, as "several of New York's prominent investment banking firms and boutiques—including Goldman Sachs, Wasserstein Perella, and The Blackstone Group—sold partial ownership to Tokyo investors laden with U.S. dollar holdings. . . . Great wealth and hints of economic disloyalty were beginning to overlap." Viewing credit as a manifestation of international power, and debt as an indicator of international weakness, Phillips graphs the decline of the United States during the Reagan years: from a 1981 position of dominance—$140.9 billion in the black as measured by net foreign investment—to a position of weakness in 1988—$532.5 billion in the red.

Throughout Phillips's analysis, Japan looms as an ominous threat: "Japanese money was beginning to speak with a voice once associated with the United

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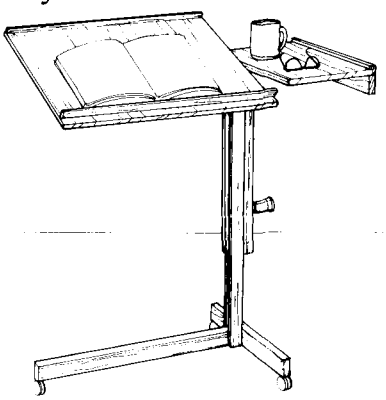

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States." In the section on Japanese investment in the United States, Phillips quotes Warren Buffet on the transfer of assets to foreign buyers: "We are much like a wealthy family that annually sells acreage so that it can sustain a lifestyle unwarranted by its current output. Until the plantation is gone, it's all pleasure and no pain. In the end, however, the family will have traded the life of an owner for the life of a tenant farmer." By 1988, according to Phillips, only one of the world's biggest banks was American, while seven were Japanese. By 1989, "only five of the world's twenty-five largest public companies by market valuation were American (down from seven in 1981); seventeen were Japanese." By the end of the 1980s, Phillips argues:

> As in prior Republican bubbles, enterprise had increasingly degenerated into speculation and worse, promoting serious misallocation of national income and resources.... By 1989 concentration of wealth, mounting debt, and financial recklessness were reminiscent enough of the Gilded Age and the 1920s to sharpen questions about similar eventual consequences, inasmuch as both prior heydays had been followed by speculative implosions, populist turbulence, increased regulatory reform and some downward redistribution of wealth.

Phillips's data persuasively document the upward redistribution of income during the Reagan years, but he fails to see that the contemporary regressive redistribution of income is an inevitable consequence of the political forces that he himself first identified in *The Emerging Republican Majority*. "The principal force which broke up the Democratic (New Deal) coalition is the Negro socio-economic revolution and the liberal Democratic ideological inability to cope with it. 'Great Society' programs aligned that party with many Negro demands, but the party was unable to defuse the racial tension sundering the nation," Phillips wrote immediately after the 1968 election. "The Democratic Party fell victim to the ideological impetus of a liberalism which had carried it beyond programs taxing the few for the benefit of the many (the New Deal) to programs taxing the many on behalf of the few (the Great Society)."

The economic core of the New Deal coalition split in two largely over the issue of race, as busing, residential integration, and affirmative action all served to place the black and white poor, and the black and white working and middle classes, in bitter competition over jobs, schools, neighborhoods, parks, and, in a broader sense, over such valuable intangibles as prestige, authority, and social space. The substance of these conflicts provided the Republican Party, once seen by many as the party of the wealthy and of corporate America, with the chance to become the advocate of a new conservative "egalitarianism," supporting "equal opportunity" and opposing racial preferences in job selection, in government contracting procedures, and in college admissions. As race-freighted issues collided with working-class cultural conservatism, divisions in the Democratic coalition spurred by the civil rights era were reinforced by the growth of suburbia, which established a jurisdictional and geographic dividing line between largely white counties and increasingly black and Hispanic cities.

Race-riddled "wedge issues" served as powerful weapons for the national Republican Party, not only to win the presidency in five of the six last elections, but to enact upwardly redistributive economic policies. It was Phillips who first described the pressures that turned the voters who became known as "Reagan Democrats" into presidential Republicans. Without these voters, the Reagan administration would never have been able to rally a political consensus for the conservative retrenchment—and for the subsequent accumulations of wealth and privilege—of the 1980s. Persuaded that federal taxes were used to finance a transfer of their income to blacks and other minorities, persuaded that the central thrust of government regulation was the enforcement of policies that cut back on their control of schools, jobs, and neighborhoods, and persuaded, finally, that government expenditures fed a morass of wasteful programs discouraging productive work, key white voters abandoned their allegiance to a coalition of the have-nots and joined in coalition with the haves.

As Reagan Democrats fully aligned with the Republican coalition by 1980, the GOP was free to provide for its most influential constituency, the affluent, by enacting the very policies favoring and encouraging upward economic redistribution that Phillips now finds so disturbing. In 1969 Phillips foresaw a populist upheaval of the right that he thought would "resurrect the vitality and commitment of Middle America—from sharecroppers and truckers to the alienated lower middle class." Now, in 1990, Phillips sees the heirs of the conservative revolution of the 1960s and early 1970s producing a very different outcome: "intensifying inequality and pain for the poor, the unprecedented growth of upper-bracket wealth, the surprisingly related growth of federal debt, global economic realignment, foreigners gobbling up large chunks of America."

In tracing the transition from the race-driven politics of 1969 to the huge growth in income inequality by the 1980s, he does not realize how closely connected the two are. In 1969, without intending to, Phillips provided the basic political logic for the economic developments of the next twenty years. The glaring omission in both *The Emerging Republican Majority* and *The Politics of Rich and Poor* is any recognition of the historic role of race not just in fracturing an alliance of the bottom half of the income ladder (which Phillips foresaw) but in sustaining economic elites and economic privilege. This is a constant theme in political studies of the South by such historians as V. O. Key and W. J. Cash. Both explained how the powerful would raise the black threat to white supremacy to choke off populist stirrings among small farmers, sharecroppers, and textile workers. In 1949 Key wrote in his classic *Southern Politics*: "Preoccupation with the Negro stifles political conflict.... When the going gets rough, when a glimmer of informed political self-interest begins to well up from the masses, the issue of white supremacy may be raised to whip them back into line."

In 1969 Phillips saw the emergence of a conservative coalition as a means to express the legitimate grievances and concerns of besieged whites in the working and middle classes. He failed to anticipate that race, as it became a divisive, complex, and morally ambiguous national issue, and ruptured a class-based political coalition, would serve the same function nationally that it had served in

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the South: to advance the practical and economic interests of the affluent. In 1981 the Reagan administration was able to capitalize on the intense hostility of white, working-class voters to a liberal federal government—hostility based on the heavily race-laden issues of affirmative action, crime, welfare, and busing—to win enactment of redistributive legislation and policies sharply cutting tax rates for the affluent, lessening the corporate regulatory burden, and reducing expenditures for the poor and the working poor. Instead of recognizing the historical precedent of race, Phillips, who prides himself on seeing the ways in which history repeats itself, failed both in 1969 and in 1990 to perceive that the interests of his "sharecroppers and truckers [and] the alienated lower middle class" would be swallowed up in a coalition dominated by the affluent.

The two Reagan administrations did, in many respects, fulfill Republican campaign pledges to converts from the white working class—ending for all practical purposes the initiation of busing suits, conducting a sustained assault on affirmative action, reflecting through the Department of Justice a responsiveness to white discontent. While the administration contended that its budget, tax cut, and deregulatory programs were designed to restore prosperity to the working and middle classes, the lion's share of the benefits was clearly channeled to the most affluent. If Phillips thought that the economic interests of the East Cleveland truck driver and the Birmingham firefighter were going to be fully protected in an alliance with T. Boone Pickens, Donald Trump, and Frank Lorenzo, I would like him to join my poker game. Phillips's discontent with the long-range economic consequences of a social conservatism he championed in the 1960s and 1970s has the hollow ring of an architect complaining about the look of the house he helped design—or about how much it costs to heat.

The real disappointment of the book, however, is the omission of material that would give a fuller sense of the contemporary forces at work in our national politics. This was the real virtue of *The Emerging Republican Majority*: it drove home a convincing sense of the power that had been unleashed in the reaction to civil rights, to liberal Supreme Court decisions on subjects ranging from pornography to the rights of criminal defendants, in reaction to the anti-war movement, to sexual liberation, to new family patterns, and to recreational drug use. In comparison, the new book is a compilation of Congressional Budget Office studies of the distribution of income, reports by *Business Week* and *Forbes* on ballooning executive salaries, and a truly eclectic collection of information on subjects as diverse as Tokyo residential land prices and the growth of centimillionaires from 1982 (400) to 1988 (1,200).

The Politics of Rich and Poor does not deliver precisely what Phillips made a name for himself producing: trenchant political analysis of the consequences of social and economic developments. We are left instead with equivocal conclusions, along the lines of "As the rich grew richer, all that could be said was that more and more Americans were beginning to notice." His last chapter invokes a tone of unsubstantiated portentousness:

> Pressures were also growing to reduce the central role of money in U.S. politics and culture. What would develop along these lines remained to be seen. But normally optimistic Americans spoke of the future with foreboding, and the decade ended as it had begun: amid a rising imperative for a new political and economic outlook, with the imminent prospect of a very different chapter in the annals of the wealth and power of the United States.

If a populist response to the extraordinary upward redistribution of income and wealth over the past ten years has failed to materialize, why is that? I would suggest that racial divisions, while becoming more moderate on the surface, have in fact become more pervasive than they were in 1968; for many voters, they permeate calculations on domestic issues from crime to taxes to education policy. During the 1970s, a period of "liberal" policy hegemony, the underclass—concentrations of poor seen by a majority of voters as both undeserving and threatening—failed to shrink in response to more federal aid (compared with pre-1964 spending), and crime, welfare dependency, and illegitimacy expanded. These failures have been an enormous obstacle to a revival of political liberalism, populism, or progressivism, with their traditional pro-government orientation. At a parallel, if less emotionally charged, level, the congressional wing of the Democratic Party, more than its Republican counterpart, has become ever more dependent for survival on PAC contributions, on gerrymandered districts, on the frank, and on a proliferation of subcommittees serving as fund-raising bases—as dependent, in the minds of many voters, as a welfare recipient is on a government check.

Focusing less on problems than on the potential for populist success, Phillips has produced a stimulant for liberals—one that may well briefly restore their

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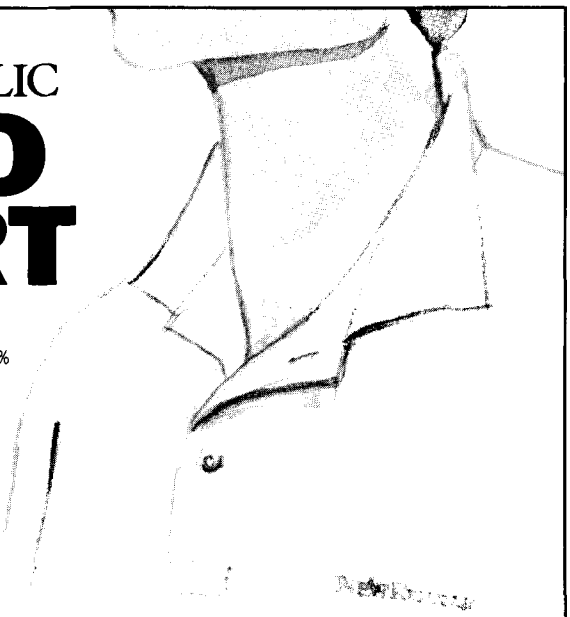

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beleaguered spirits. It may be, as Phillips argues,

> that the 1990s would be a time in which to correct the excesses of the 1980s, for the dangers posed by excessive individualism, greed, and insufficient concern for Americans as a community went beyond the issue of fairness and, by threatening the ability of the United States to maintain its economic position in the world, created an unusual meeting ground for national self-interest and reform.

But his scenario is more plausible in the event of an economic downturn. Without the luxury of a recession, Phillips and his new allies on the left face at least two unresolved tasks. The first is to develop redistributive policies that extend benefits from the working poor well into the middle class and that can be convincingly portrayed as contributing to productivity, economic growth, and to the generation of wealth. This is no mean feat. The second task is to develop policies that reasonably address poverty, crime, welfare dependency, and joblessness, while lessening discontent over racial preferences, coercive government, and cultural difference—policies that maintain the loyalty of both blacks and whites, for with the full enfranchisement of black America, any populist or progressive drive now requires biracial cooperation. The hurdles facing a bottom-up, biracial coalition are sobering. Putting together such a majority requires more than the adroit manipulation of Congressional Budget Office income distribution tables, incendiary revelations of CEO salaries, and warnings about the predatory Japanese. The hard fact remains that as things currently stand, the forces pulling apart those who live in the bottom half are considerably more powerful than the forces enabling them to pull together.

THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL is a political reporter at *The Washington Post*. His book about race and politics will be published by W. W. Norton next spring.

The Geography of His Dreams

BY STANLEY KAUFFMANN

The Rain Came Last & Other Stories by Niccolò Tucci

(New Directions, 223 pp., $22.95)

One of the charms of these stories by Niccolò Tucci is that he understands the mystical nature of memory. At one point he writes of emigrants who make a return visit to Europe "where nobody awaits them and where no home will shelter them. They go all the same, to correct the geography of their dreams." This collection is an emigration to the past, in Europe and elsewhere, to verify his dreams. The stories are clearly based on fact but are nonetheless his dreams.

In her introduction to the book, Mary McCarthy calls the stories "fiction"; she also calls them "confessions" and "autobiography." Her uncertainty about terms is one kind of compliment to Tucci, confirmation that he has fixed with the right ambiguity the territory in which his book dwells: the past, but the past as it is valuable to the present, not as a record of data. Who would care about a complete chronicle of Tucci's childhood and youth and early manhood? But the way that Tucci has used those years, selecting what he needs and adjusting the colors—the way a painter selects what he needs from a landscape instead of reproducing it photographically—makes his book so fresh with life that it almost feels warm to the touch.

All of these stories, as they are called for convenience, have been published before, mostly in *The New Yorker*, beginning in 1946. What we can't gather of his biography and his family from this book, or from his earlier novel *The Sun and the Moon*, which appeared in 1977, Tucci appends here in a postscript, characteristically flavorful. He was born in 1908 in Lugano, the son of an Italian doctor and a Russian mother, and grew up in Tuscany. After an attempt at government service under Mussolini, he turned against fascism and immigrated to New York. The new home is not scanted, but the emphasis is on the Italian days when the family's fortunes fluctuated between luxe and proudly borne poverty.

Tucci re-creates those days with a kind of economical richness, as he also depicts the slightly sardonic Italian-ness of his father and the lofty battiness of his mother. Impatient with reality, "she had suspended time. 'This is no life,' she said, and would refuse on certain days to put the correct date on letters." His parents' lives, his sister's and brothers' lives, seem to embrace his own. Thus embraced, these stories run their course of irony and pain and, often, delight. Obviously no person's history is as tonally consistent as this book is, but that is one reason why it and comparable books exist, to find the cohesion in what seemed haphazard, to correct the geography of dreams. (By comparable books, I mean Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* and Nathalie Sarraute's *Childhood*.)

The first story, "Terror and Grief," is representative, because it is not a conventional narrative, it is a pageant of feeling, a recapture of the sensory and the emotional in the boy Niccolò and his siblings in their lovely home while their parents are away on a holiday trip. The children, cared for by a staff that includes fräuleins and maids, saturate themselves in the atmosphere of their house, hoping to draw from the very objects in rooms the reassurance that their parents truly exist, will return, will again share this place and these things with them:

> There was another companion we all had in those days, who helped us a great deal—the sun. . . . The sadness and the longing for our parents remained but were tamed by his presence. The sun entered the living room shortly after breakfast, and at a certain moment touched the bronze frills on the handle of the door that led to our parents' bedroom. Then that handle . . . lost its sinister aspect and became a source of joy, because there was a halo of light around it and a new point of brightness on the ceiling.

How much is in that passage of awe, loneliness, a child's-eye view of detail, and, above all, of the idea of safety, never again to be known so surely.

When at the last the parents return and ring the doorbell:

> The maids ran down the stairs, and we could hear their shrieks of joy, and then words, voices, *their* voices. And now they came upstairs, yes, they came, yes, here, right here.
>
> The wound was closed.

Even in this fugue of longings, Tucci gives us touches of the quality that will center in other of the stories: wit.

> Fräulein Thiess insulted the maids by asking for the saltcellar, which she shook over her plate, aiming at the food from up high, as if she wished to punish it. Even the way she cut her meat or plunged her spoon into her soup was a way of refusing that food, of despising those who had prepared it with so much song.

With the next story, "The Beautiful Blue Horse," wit, affectionate and somehow nostalgic, takes over. The family is now poor (the Russian mother had lost

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her money in the Bolshevik Revolution) and is now living in the Tuscan countryside. The father has become the district doctor, which he dislikes because, as Tucci tells us later, "he hated to see patients; he had no faith in medicine anyway." But the doctor needs a horse to draw his "light two-wheeler" on rural visits, and he lets himself be persuaded to buy a sorry old plug:

> We bought the horse because he was Hungarian . . . and the Hungarians we knew were charming, rich, and educated people. . . . It was the face of a horse that has traveled and knows how to behave among the international set.

The subjects vary widely, yet Tucci addresses them all in the same genial-melancholy voice. Indeed, one of the pleasures of the book is in how he adapts his voice to different purposes. "Hey!" is fundamentally about rural poverty and brutality. "The Rain Came Last" is about a horrible accident. "This Particular Rich Lady" is about the bitter caprices of fate.

"Military Intelligence" deals with the non-intelligence of the Mussolini regime. (Tucci's father, he reports, was pro-Mussolini.) "The Siege" is about the fantasy-filled wait for the return of the oldest son from the war—the First World War—after he has written to say that he is en route. Yet Tucci's authorial voice includes them all, almost as if we were in fact listening to *him*.

All through the stories set in Italy, the first nine of the fourteen in the book, Tucci illuminates with images:

> we had only one rusty iron pipe on top of our roof which looked like a thin priest . . .

> The sound of Tesi's coughing upstairs had the quality of rotting wood.

> A tall Roman prince who had no face at all, just two sharp profiles glued together.

And while a peasant woman is making straw hats: "Every now and then she threw a strange glance at the poverty around her, as if to make sure that no one had stolen it."

In the 1930s Tucci, with his wife and child, moved to New York, where the last five stories are (mainly) set. (One story, "Death of the Professor," which has nothing to do with him, could painlessly have been omitted.) The writing in these stories is not inferior, but it is somewhat different, as if he were trying to live like an American without losing his Italianness. He succeeds, but we are aware that he is succeeding; it costs him some of his lovely similes.

The story that shifts the book's locus to America, "The Evolution of Knowledge," is about his difficulties with a Mr. Feinstein, who lives in the New York apartment directly below the Tucci family and who objects to the noise that the Tucci children make. At Mr. Feinstein's request, Tucci tries his best to keep them quiet at certain fixed hours, but they bother Tucci himself in his work at other hours, so he goes downstairs and asks Mr. Feinstein to be more stringent, to insist on more hours of silence.

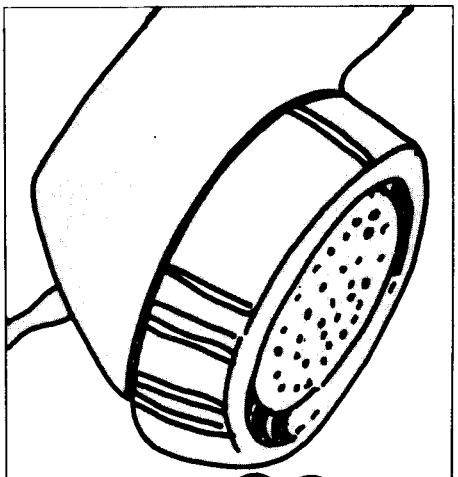
One of the stories puts him on a ship as he returns to New York from a visit to Italy, a ship that carries a lot of elderly Italians, who are coming to America to see their children and grandchildren and to die with them. The story is called "The Underground Settlers," a term that the captain gives Tucci. "They come to fill graves," the captain says.

The last story, "The News," tells how Tucci in New York learns the news of his mother's death in Italy, how he goes for a walk, finds himself in front of a church readied for a funeral, and goes in. "I borrowed the dead from the mourners." But while he uses this funeral as proxy for the one he could not attend, he finds that wit doesn't disappear even on such occasions:

> I noticed that most of the people dressed in black who were passing by me on their way to the front pews didn't seem to know how to behave, and this pleased me, as it used to please me in school, on the days of written examinations, when the faces of my companions betrayed fear and perplexity.

Tucci says that he is "by nationality a planetarian" because of his mixed parentage and background. His career supports his claim. Long after he moved to America, he won prizes in Italy for books written in his first language, and this collection is proof enough that he has English in his unconscious as well as his conscious mind. Others born and raised elsewhere have written excellently in English: Nabokov is the immediate example (more of a pyrotechnician than even Conrad). But I recall no other writer who retains his first "ear" in his second language. Nabokov doesn't sound Russian or Conrad Polish as Tucci sounds Italian—in English. I don't know if he writes in Italian and then translates himself; if so, that would help to explain the process but would not lessen the uniqueness.

For that reason alone, *The Rain Came Last* would be rewarding, almost voluptuously so. To some degree, we luxuriate as planetarians ourselves, simply by reading in our language the writing of an author who has fused languages. But beyond that pleasure, Tucci makes vivid and poignant, as some other fine writers have done, a basic perception: memory is not a storehouse, a trunk in the attic to be rummaged through. It is a place, the only place accessible to humans where, without fail or hindrance, facts can be selected and rendered into truth. •



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PRAGUE DIARIST

National velvet

THIS CITY IS SO BEAUTIFUL IT'S hard to believe it wasn't always free. Before last November, a Czech friend tells me, the beauty was ironic at best, alienating at worst; but now Prague is what it looks like. On the Charles Bridge, half a millennium old and reserved for strollers, the evening breeze is soft and caressing. The city is so quiet that except for the occasional clatter of a streetcar in the distance, the only sounds are footfalls, whispers, laughter, the cries of gulls quarreling over nestling places under the arches, and the muffled music of troubadours and cellists playing here and there in front of the Baroque statues along the edge of the bridge. Below, on the River Vltava, white swans glide on black water. The scattered lights of the town are warmly orange, and their glow is subdued enough so that the stars and a swirl of moonlit cloud are crisp and sharp in the sky. On the biggest of the surrounding hills is the Castle, a streak of brilliantly floodlit Baroque facade surrounding a Gothic cathedral. It's the same Castle that was successively the seat of Czech kings and Hapsburg emperors, the symbol of arbitrary power that got Franz Kafka to thinking, and the looming headquarters of Communist bosses from Klement Gottwald to Gustáv Husák. Now it's where Václav Havel goes to work in the morning.

PUBLIC LIFE HERE HAS A STRONG aesthetic aspect, as you might expect from a country fresh from a revolution led by artists which brought to power a playwright who dates his overt political involvement to a 1976 campaign in defense of an imprisoned rock'n'roll group. In every medium, the Czechs tend to play their art for laughs. "It's difficult to explain," explains their president in *Disturbing the Peace*, a book-length interview just published in the United States, "but without the laughter we would simply be unable to do the serious things. If one were required to increase the dramatic seriousness of his face in relation to the seriousness of the problems he had to confront, he would quickly petrify and become his own statue." On the theory, presumably, that it is better to put up statues than to become them, the post-Communist city fathers are currently sponsoring a kind of guerrilla sculpture show. Throughout the Old Town, where motor traffic is forbidden, sculptures ambush you in unexpected alleys, alcoves, and courtyards. Most of the pieces are ephemeral, site-specific, and exhuberantly clever. In an archway: a clothesline spider web inhabited by a fat spider-cum-eagle clad in chicken feathers. In a courtyard: a white papier-mâché elephant, legs splayed and flat on its belly, surmounted by a bearded mock-hero. On a patch of bare earth: eight fearsome black spears, each taller than a man, stuck in the ground and pointing straight skyward, interspersed with as many gigantic stalks of wheat that bend to an imaginary wind.

THE PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE, HOWever, is not hidden away but is right out in the open facing the medieval mechanical clock of the Old Town Hall, Czechoslovakia's No. 1 tourist attraction. Picture this: a giant, headless, four-legged animal, big enough to walk under, covered in gold paint. The body of this beast is a car, an old Soviet Lada. The thick legs grow down from where the tires should be. The license plate reads GOING SOMEWHERE? No one can look at this statue without laughing twice. The first time is when you first get a load of it. The second time is when you walk around to the back and notice, hanging between the hind legs, a pair of softball-sized testicles painted a cheery red. I don't know who the artist is, but I do know this: he can forget about his NEA grant.

ON THE GLORIOUS FOURTH, there's a big reception at the U.S. ambassador's residence, a palatial neoclassical mansion. The fact that the ambassador is Shirley Temple is perfectly consonant with the happy surreality of a country where the highest officials are literary jailbirds and the most ruthless businessmen are Communists. Ambassador Black, as she is formally known, apparently got off to a rocky start last year. In an excess of perkiness, for example, she invited the Communist Party's chief ideologist to visit the United States, a minor disaster only narrowly averted. (The man was to have arrived on November 17, the very day of the Velvet Revolution.) But she's been doing fine since then, and now she is standing on the receiving line, tiny and beaming. She's wearing a T-shirt inscribed, in a presumably unconscious McGovernite echo, TRAVEL THE WORLD, THEN COME HOME AMERICA. Out on the lawn, clumps of people stand around. At the center of the largest, densest clump is President Havel, deep in conversation with one of his young advisers. He wears an elegant, charcoal-gray suit, and his ruddy skin and red-blond hair and mustache make him look bloomingly healthy despite the ever-present cigarette. He takes a moment to pose for a picture with a half-dozen U.S. Marines, which elicits applause, but he does not "work the room." It works him, though, and he bears with good grace the godlike aura conferred by the silent, awe-struck circle that surrounds him. Only his small smile betrays what I take to be his awareness that his daily life has become absurd in ways he never thought to write a play about. That and one of his bodyguards: this strapping fellow wears an electronic earpiece, just like a real Secret Service agent, but he also wears a pigtail.

AT A NOISY DINNER GIVEN BY WILliam Luers, a former U.S. ambassador here who is now president of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, at the 7 Angels Restaurant, I'm seated with Michael Žantovský, an ex-Reuters correspondent who's now Havel's press secretary. Like most of Havel's people, he speaks near-perfect English. Žantovský is in a mood to be provocative, so he tells us he thinks there are times a journalist ought to go to jail. When, for example? Well, he says, the Havel government inherited from the Communist secret police a list of 140,000 informers. The list includes not only enthusiastic collaborators but also obscure citizens who were blackmailed (because they were homosexuals, say) and who may have given the police a few useless tidbits, and it may also include people who were not informers at all. The list was used to keep conclusively guilty informers off Party slates in last month's election, but it is otherwise the most closely guarded of state secrets. If a reporter were to get hold of it and publish it, Žantovský says, the damage to the social fabric would be so great the reporter would merit the slammer. The press secretary's tablemates, journalists all, argue with him. But he makes a plausible case, and anyhow it's clear that he doesn't mean he'd really try to jail such a reporter, just that he thinks the guy would morally deserve it. I reflect that the quality of revolutionary justice has dramatically improved of late. The French had the guillotine, the Russians had the Gulag, and the Nicaraguans had the *turbas* (still do, apparently). The Czechoslovaks have a presidential press secretary who is willing, for the sake of dinner party argument, to entertain the abstract possibility that there could be hypothetical circumstances under which a conjectural journalist might theoretically (though not actually) deserve to get arrested. Inside the velvet glove of the Velvet Revolution is a velvet hand.

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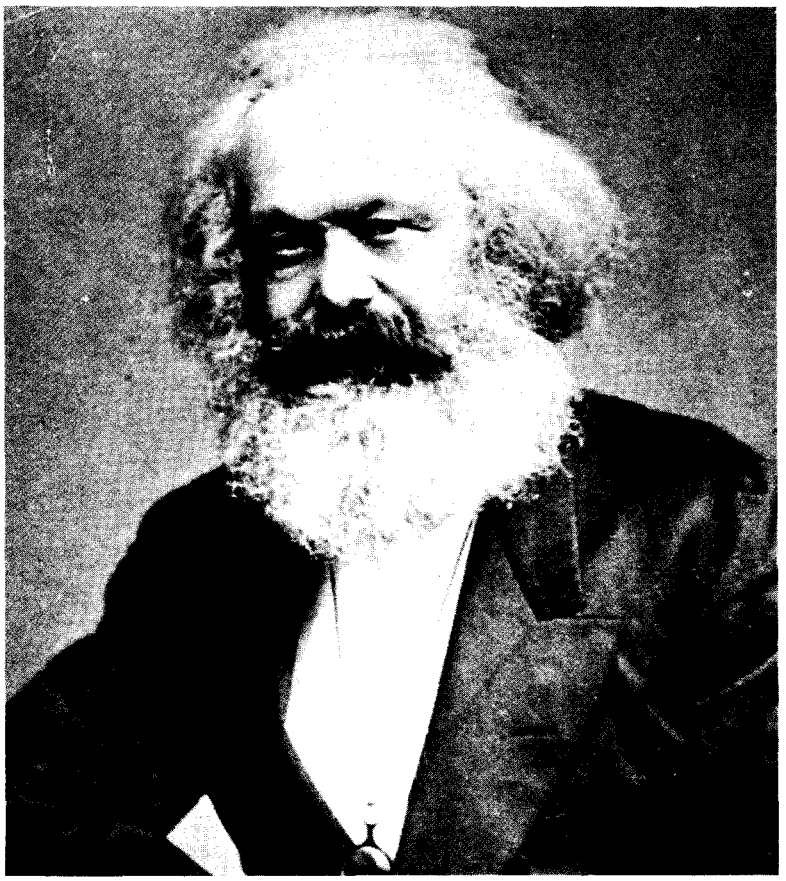

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The Bush administration recently established an Eastern European Growth Fund to encourage private investment in Central and Eastern Europe. The fund is to be administered through the U.S. government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and Salomon Brothers has been named both its investment advisor and manager.

We're pleased to play a part in the President's initiative.

While we make markets every day, it isn't often we get the privilege of helping develop a free one.

Salomon Brothers

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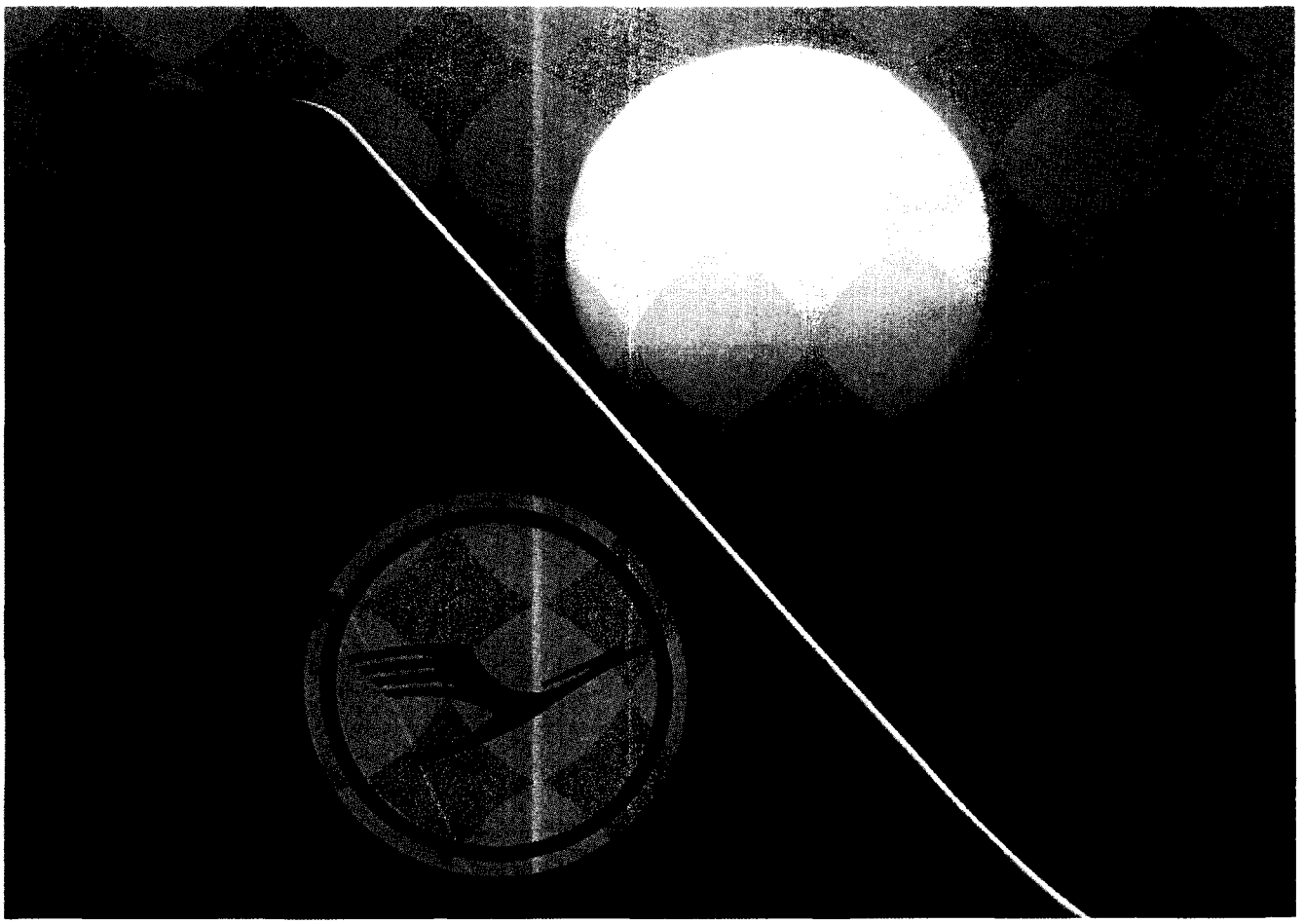
Let Lufthansa take you to the place where the climate keeps getting warmer. Eastern Europe.



Remember the Iron Curtain? Not so long ago, Eastern Europe seemed remote and uninviting to travellers from the West.

Today, of course, the climate has improved dramatically. And while many western airlines are just now beginning to open up routes to the East, to Lufthansa, Eastern Europe is already familiar ground.

In fact, no other airline flies to more countries in Eastern Europe than Lufthansa.You will even find Lufthansa offices throughout Eastern Europe, staffed by people who have the experience to help you with local travel arrangements, hotels, rental cars and more.

As western travellers rediscover Eastern Europe, no wonder so many take the airline that never left.

People expect the world of us.

Lufthansa

Lufthansa is a participant in the mileage programs of United, Delta, USAir and Continental/Eastern. See your Travel Agent for details.

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